ABORIGINAL HOUSING in remote australia

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....in Remote Australia....
.....

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This Thesis was submitted as part of the requirements for the award of the

GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN ARCHITECTURE

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at the

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BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA

November 1982

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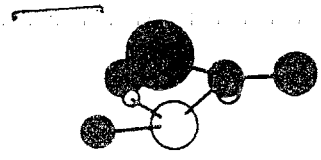

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abstract

A notable deficiency has existed in the body of socio-architectural research in Australia. Very little work had been completed which addresses the complex field of Aboriginal housing in remote Australia from an architectural point of view.

This thesis attempts to help fill this gap, through a broad study of theoretical and practical research on this and allied fields. No guidelines have been previously prepared which have successfully aided architects in the design of Aboriginal housing. This thesis attempts to satisfy this deficiency also.

Chapter One provides a base for all following discussion by placing the subject of non-urban Aboriginal housing in several contexts. Most significantly this chapter develops through traditional Aboriginal culture to a Model of the cultural gap. This Model is then used in Chapter Two with theoretical discussion on transition stress to develop a Model of transition stress in Aboriginal housing. Chapter Two also examines architectural involvement in this field. Thus Chapter Two builds a theoretical framework covering design variables in Aboriginal housing.

Chapters Three and Four comprehensively test this theoretical framework through examination of practical research on specific Aboriginal settlements. Chapter Three's case studies are brief and varied, presenting a wide view of transition problems and architectural difficulties found in a range of Aboriginal settlements. Chapter Four examines one settlement specifically, this being Mornington Island, as a final exhaustive test of the theoretical findings of Chapter Two.

Chapter Five summarises the conclusions of earlier chapters to arrive at a final conclusion for this thesis.

contents

CHAPTER ONE

ABORIGINAL HOUSING IN CONTEXT

1:00 HYPOTHESIS 11

Hypothesis Expanded

1:01 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY 12

1:02 SCOPE OF STUDY 14

Introduction
Global Context
National Context
Political and Economic Context
Environmental Control

1:03 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 17

1:04 HISTORICAL CONTEXT 18

Introduction
Race Relations
Government Policy
Housing and Settlements

1:05 TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL CULTURE 24

Introduction
The Spiritual Environment
The Social Environment
The Natural Environment
The Built Environment

1:06 THE CULTURAL GAP 39

Introduction
Social Organization
Environmental Perception

1:07 THE IDEOLOGY OF TRANSITION 47

1:08 CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 50

CHAPTER TWO

DESIGN VARIABLES FOR TRANSITION

2:01 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 51

2:02 TRANSITION STRESS 52

Stress
Transition Stress
Cross Cultural Transition Stress

2:03 TRANSITION PROBLEMS IN ABORIGINAL HOUSING 56

Introduction
Social Organization
Environmental Perception
Easing Transition

2:04 THE ARCHITECT 66

Introduction
The Potential Role of the Architect
Practical Obstacles and Professional Attitude
Generalization

2:05 CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 75

CHAPTER THREE

CONTEMPORARY SETTLEMENTS

3:01 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 77

3:02 THE ROLE OF ABORIGINAL SETTLEMENTS 78

Introduction
The Historical and Present Role
The Ideal Role of Settlements

3:03 QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT HOUSING 84

Introduction
Housing Direction
Review

3:04 LOOMA 89

Introduction
Housing Direction
Review

3:05 LAVERTON 94

Introduction
Housing Direction
Review

3:06 JIGALONG AND YATALA 101

Introduction
Jigalong
Yatala
Review

3:07 DESERT SETTLEMENT TRENDS 106

Introduction
Desert Homeland Centres
Review

3:08 CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 114

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MORNINGTON ISLAND SETTLEMENT

4:01 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 115

4:02 THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT 117

Introduction
Climate
Vegetation
Review

4:03 SOCIAL ORGANIZATION 120

Introduction
Kinship Structure
Territorial Structure
Religion
Review

4:04 ENVIRONMENTAL PERCEPTION 125

The Environment and Man
Fire
Review

4:05 TRADITIONAL SETTLEMENTS 127

Introduction
Camps
Shelters
Review

4:06 CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT 133

European Contact - Historical Outline
Cultural Change
Cultural Trend

4:07 THE CONTEMPORARY SETTLEMENT 140

Settlement Structure
Domiciles
Domiciliary Behaviour
New Housing
User Behaviour in New Housing
Review

4:08 CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 156

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

5:01 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 158

5:02 TRANSITION STRESS IN ABORIGINAL HOUSING 160

Introduction
Chapter Three Conclusions
Chapter Four Conclusions
Summary

5:03 ARCHITECTURAL CONSULTATION 170

5:04 HYPOTHESIS VALIDITY 172

Hypothesis Restated
Hypothesis Tested

5:05 GUIDELINES 173

Introduction
Architectural Consultation
Housing Qualities

5:06 FINAL NOTE 176

list of figures

CHAPTER ONE

figure 1.1	Aboriginal Housing Quality	13
figure 1.2	Distribution of Australian Aborigines	16
figure 1.3	Aboriginal Settlements after European Contact	23
figure 1.4	Traditional Domiciliary Layouts	33
figure 1.5	Traditional Aboriginal Shelters	36
figure 1.6	Traditional Aboriginal Shelters	37
figure 1.7	Traditional Aboriginal Shelters	38
figure 1.8	Model of the Cultural Gap	46

CHAPTER TWO

figure 2.1	Aboriginal Grouping and External Orientation	60
figure 2.2	Maintenance Problems	62
figure 2.3	Model of Transition Stress in Aboriginal Housing	67

CHAPTER THREE

figure 3.1	Map Showing Settlement Locations	79
figure 3.2	Queensland D.A.I.A. House 1981	86
figure 3.3	Looma Village Housing	90
figure 3.4	The Laverton House	95
figure 3.5	Desert Housing Solutions	111

CHAPTER FOUR

figure 4.1	Map of Mornington Island	116
figure 4.2	Traditional Lardil Camp Layout	129
figure 4.3	Traditional Lardil Shelters	131
figure 4.4	The Mornington Island Mission Settlement	142

figure 4.5 Mornington Island 'Village' Housing 143
figure 4.6 Mornington Island 'Ridge' Housing 144
figure 4.7 Mornington Island Temporary Shelters 146
figure 4.8 Use of External Spaces 149
figure 4.9 Use of D.A.I.A. 'Ridge' Housing 153

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Mr. James Stewart Architect. Queensland Institute of Technology.	thesis adviser

CHAPTER ONE

Something obscene
In man-made sounds affronts the sweet and clean,
But Nature's never.
The harsh scream of the seabirds - these
Somehow belong
As much as the wren's airy song.

Kath Walker (1)

ABORIGINAL HOUSING IN CONTEXT

1:00 HYPOTHESIS

Sympathetic architectural involvement in the design of Aboriginal housing can ease the stress suffered by Aboriginal clients.

HYPOTHESIS EXPANDED

This thesis supports the need for appropriate housing design for non-urban Australian Aborigines. Lack of success generally in this field has allowed serious criticism of the architectural profession. Designers of Aboriginal housing require an improved appreciation of the complex variables involved in design for the culturally different.

Aborigines have experienced stress and emotional strain in the transition to Western culture. Housing unsuited to particular Aboriginal needs has been one notable contributing factor to this transition stress. A more sympathetic approach is necessary.

A clear need exists for greater architectural sympathy for user's needs in this field, especially with regard to socio-cultural factors.

1:01 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Aboriginal housing is in a poor state. Many existing remote area settlements show evidence of neglect and deprivation. Refer to figure 1.1. Present solutions provided by whites, following suburban ideals are in many cases not appropriate for the particular occupants. Several prominent writers on Aboriginal affairs have asserted these points including Doctor M. Heppell, former director of the Aboriginal Housing Panel (2)(3), Doctor H.C. Coombs of the Australian National University. (4) and Professor C.D. Rowley, a leading Australian anthropological author (5).

A pressing need exists for improvement in understanding the cultural variables in housing design for Aborigines. Architects in particular need a far more thorough appreciation of the complex factors involved in designing for this culturally different group, as discussed by Heppell (6) and Professor B.S. Saini of the University of Queensland (7).

Several references have established that serious ramifications have emanated from the poorly considered housing solutions which have prevailed in the past from architects. This thesis defines problem areas in this very complex field which have usually not been well understood. From this clarification, guidelines are established for the design process of remote area Aboriginal housing.

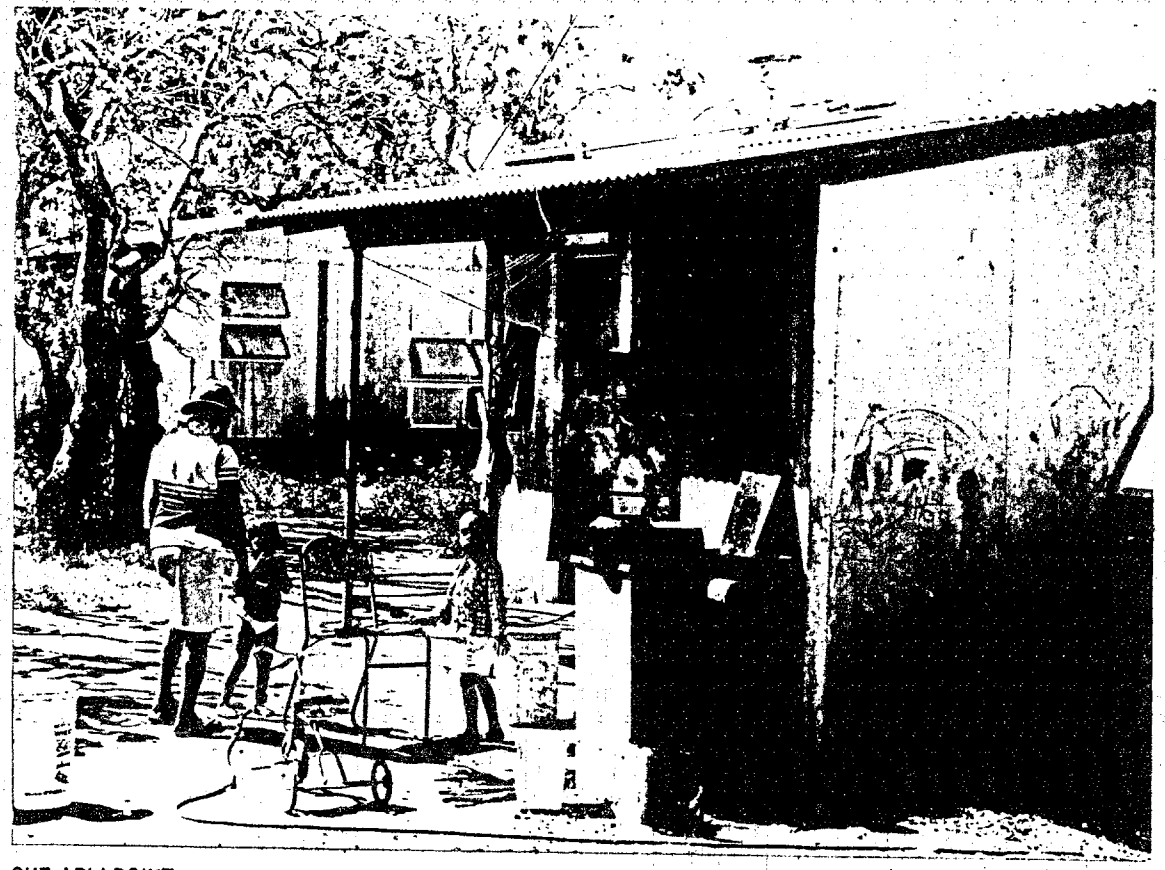
The desperate need for architectural research and improved solutions in this area is evidenced in several key texts regarding Aboriginal housing. A Senate Select Committee on Aborigines chaired by Senator N.T. Bonner has stated that,

> *There is a need for research into the architectural needs of Aborigines.* (8) p 207

Doctor H.C. Coombs has written,

> *There is no element in social policy for Aborigines the results of which have been so*

GO-GO SETTLEMENT - KIMBERLEY REGION W.A. photo : A.D.A.



ONE ARM POINT - KIMBERLEY REGION W.A. photo : A.D.A.

FIGURE 1·1 ABORIGINAL HOUSING QUALITY

disappointing and so confusing as that related to housing. (4) p 239

Doctor Heppell has said,

> *No fundamental principles about design have yet been established for traditional Aboriginal groups. The establishment of these principles is now a matter of extreme urgency.* (6) p 25

The need for architectural study on Aboriginal housing is well recognized among the sociological and anthropological professions probably more so than within the architectural profession. This thesis aims at helping to satisfy this need.

1:02 SCOPE OF STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Housing for indiginous people, considered in total, is a very broad and complex area of study. For practical reasons, this thesis is restricted to a confined section of this wide subject.

GLOBAL CONTEXT

International research and trends in indigenous housing will not be treated in this thesis for two reasons. Firstly, an indepth study and review of worldwide movements in housing of indigenous and minority groups would necessarily be of extremely large dimension and complexity. This is beyond the practical scope of this thesis.

Secondly, establishing comparison with any of the multitude and variety of overseas groups would interfere with the clarity of this thesis. No other race or society in the world coincides exactly with the culture of Australian Aborigines. The cultural traits of the persons for whom housing is designed are of essential significance to this

thesis. Variables include social organization and environmental perception. No racial group in the world coincides with Australian Aboriginal culture on these aspects.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

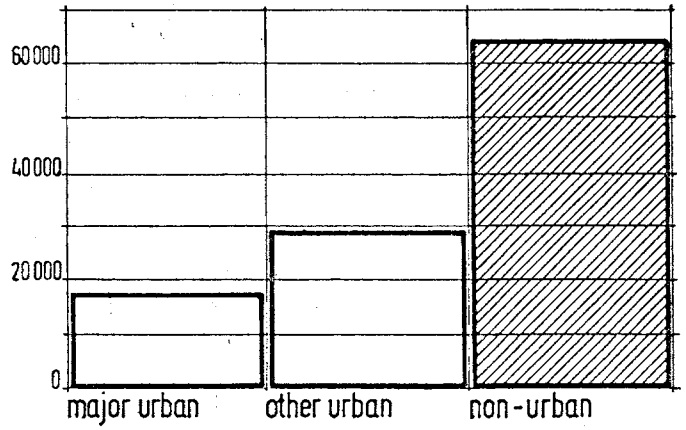
This thesis studies the housing requirements of non-urban Australian Aborigines. Housing for Aboriginal people of urban areas is regarded as a separate subject. These people's needs would usually be of a different nature from Aborigines of remote areas, who have retained a degree of the traditional lifestyle.

As a generalization, urban Aborigines in many cases seek housing of a formal urban nature. Housing for non-urban Aborigines offers a greater challenge, and is in greater need of improvement. This thesis is restricted to remote area of Aboriginal housing.

Statistics

Demographic statistics on Aborigines are scarce. Census figures have defined the numbers of Aborigines in urban and non-urban areas. Figures of the 1971 and the 1976 Australian census are represented in figure 1.2. This figure shows that non-urban Aborigines are the largest group of Aborigines in Australia. These are concentrated mainly in Queensland and Northern Territory (9).

No figures known to the author have defined the degree of acculturization of Australian Aborigines. Neither have national decentralization trends been quantified. Throughout this thesis, quantitative adverbs (most, many, some) are used. These adverbs have been selected by the author as calculated to be most appropriate from the sources of reference, and have been further controlled by checks from personal correspondence.



1971

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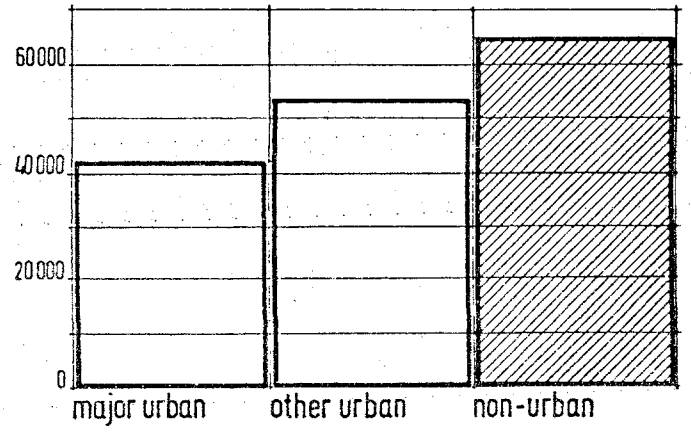
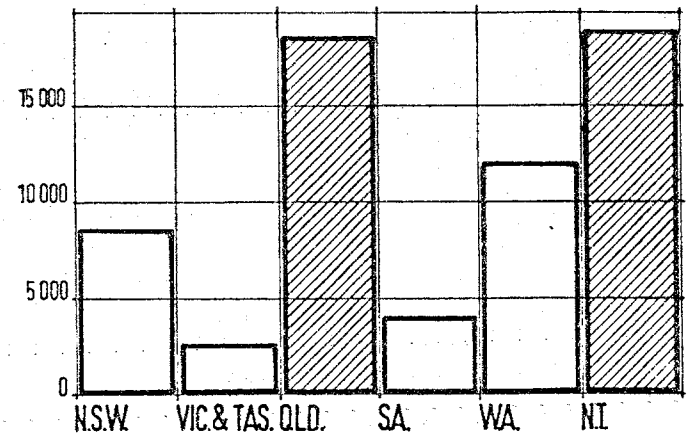


1976

AREA DISTRIBUTION



1976

STATE DISTRIBUTION OF NON-URBAN ABORIGINES

1981 NATIONAL FIGURES NOT AVAILABLE AT TIME OF WRITING

FIGURE 1·2 DISTRIBUTION OF AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES FROM A.B.S. (9)

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Aboriginal housing is largely dependant on political and economic considerations, as with most elements of inter-cultural affairs in Australia.

Government policy on Aboriginal affairs in Australia is necessarily a most important consideration in the subject of Aboriginal housing. An outline of this topic is presented early in Chapter One.

Fiscal considerations are beyond the scope of this thesis. Economic factors are a significant determinant in Aboriginal housing but are outside the bounds of this architectural study.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

The need for housing to moderate uncomfortable conditions is well recognized amongst the architectural profession. The need to design housing appropriate to the cultural character of the user is not widely appreciated by architects. This latter point is seen as the main deficiency in non-urban Aboriginal housing, and as such is the main thrust of this thesis. Thus, this study does not involve any detailed discussion on environmental control, although it is clearly of prime importance in housing design and should be automatically considered by architects.

This thesis is restricted to study of the special housing needs of non-urban Australian Aborigines, and to the role of the architect in this field.

1:03 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER

Chapter One provides a contextural basis for the remainder of this thesis. Specialized variables involved in Aboriginal housing design are covered in this chapter. The historical

context of this study will be outlined initially, providing a necessary background to present circumstances.

Following this, a generalized discussion on traditional Aboriginal culture serves as a basis for understanding the cultural traits of this race. Traditional culture is a complex study, and as such is treated in outline only. This thesis looks mainly at aspects of that culture which have relevance to contemporary housing for remote areas, of relevance to the hypothesis.

A model of the cultural gap between Aboriginal Australians and European Australians will be established. The differences between these two cultures are shown to be vast. Transition stress is so significant a factor for Aborigines in today's society as a result of the vastness of this gap.

Chapter One closes with a discussion on the ideological validity of forced transition of Aborigines into European society.

1:04 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

The history of housing for Australian Aborigines began centuries before European contact. Aboriginal lifestyle of pre-European times will be covered later in this chapter. This section provides an outline of changes in treatment of Aboriginal affairs since white settlement. The areas of race relations and government policy are considered crucial to an understanding of the development of Aboriginal housing.

RACE RELATIONS

The arrival of Europeans in Australia was followed by the start of the decline of Aboriginal society and culture. In most areas of contact competition developed between the races. The native race, traditionally a peaceful people,

did little to oppose the initial white settlement. As the European community grew in size and obvious permanence, native resentment grew. Neither race held an empathy for the customs and lifestyle of the other.

Early settlers could not understand the natives' unwillingness to 'civilize themselves ' - to accept white culture as superior to theirs. So different were the two time-established cultures that there was little possibility of social or territorial compromise. Aboriginal culture has steadily declined.

Aborigines, denied rights to land reacted in most cases by moving to more remote areas, upsetting the long standing tribal structures. In many cases, they also reacted by theft, by spearing stock and by attacks on white settlers themselves. Large scale massacre of Aborigines commenced and continued through the nineteenth century. Aborigines of remote areas were protected by distance, but eventually even they were affected by the push of white settlement.

Aboriginal population (and with it their whole culture) decreased through violence initiated by white settlers, and by encounters with European diseases including venereal disease, small pox, and influenza. European Australians were much more technically advanced than the natives, and after the gold rush, the new Australians outnumbered the Aborigines. As a result the white race started to dominate the native race and has claimed rights over these people ever since.

Generally, white Australians have held a very low opinion of Aborigines. Professor Rowley has written,

> *He (the Aborigine) is inextricably in, but is constantly reminded that he is not a welcome member of general Australian society.(5) p 151*

The minority group has suffered prejudice, as strong as existing anywhere in the world. Aborigines have been treated as lower class citizens, or have been ignored. Aborigines, subject to culture shock and racial discrimination have in many cases become apathetic and miserable.

Many attempts have been made to help the Aborigines in response to the conscience of the ruling white classes. Even in recent years however, poor understanding of Aboriginal values and perception has led to lack of success for many programmes.

There is now an increasing movement among Australians in favour of compensating the Aborigines for some of the loss of their land and of their culture.

Total satisfaction for all parties is clearly impossible, but with slowly growing general empathy from white Australians, there is hope of some improvement of the Aboriginal condition in such areas as land rights and Aboriginal housing.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

As explained earlier, detailed examination of the political and economic factors in Aboriginal housing is not an essential element of this study. However, an outline of the approach of recent administrations to Aboriginal affairs will provide an understanding of the approach of governments to design of housing schemes.

After the Second World War and into the 1960s, official Federal and Queensland government policy encouraged Assimilation. This may be defined as the concept of absorbing minorities into the social structure of the more powerful group. It was seen as correct for Aborigines to imitate the lifestyle and customs of whites in preference to their own 'primitive' culture. With this new identity, they would be able to assume equal rights and responsibilities beside white Australians.

Assimilation is still regarded by many as the best way to solve the 'Aboriginal problem'. The Australian government has progressed from this less-informed approach. During the 1970s, Prime Ministers McMahon and Whitlam advocated a policy of Integration.

The concept of Integration involved an aim to ensure that

Aborigines attained equal rights in the broad community, whilst at the same time being encouraged to take pride in their own identity and culture. Aborigines would also be allowed to manage their own affairs.

In 1973 the Labor government injected larger sums into Aboriginal affairs including housing. The Labor administration showed considerable enthusiasm to improve the state of these people. However, many programmes of the Labor years were based on misunderstanding of Aboriginal needs, and were implemented too hastily. Nevertheless, considerable progress was made during that time.

The official policy of the Fraser Liberal government of Self Management is very sound as written. Unfortunately, as Doctor M. Heppell has noted, the policy and the practice are not consistent with each other (2). Government policy on Aboriginal Affairs has progressed to an acceptable stage in terms of humanitarianism and cross-cultural sympathy.

It remains to be proven however, how well and efficiently the written policies translate to the practical level.

HOUSING AND SETTLEMENTS

For centuries Aborigines in tribal circumstances adequately housed themselves. Sufficient protection from the elements was built simply from natural materials. White involvement in Aboriginal housing is recent and government interest as such is restricted almost to this century.

Settlements for Aborigines were established by whites in early days to collect dark people together to ease administration and management. These settlements also effected a segregation of the races. Originally, the settlements comprised only the residences of the white supervisors with storage space for provisions for the Aborigines.

A trend developed where Aborigines camped in shelters of a traditional type at these settlements and at the fringes of towns. In some cases, Aborigines were attracted to the perceived easiness of lifestyle. Often, they were virtually

compelled to live near settlements, as their children were taken to these places for a white education.

In some cases, Aborigines were provided with simple rough housing. Usually in the early days they built their own makeshift shelters near the administration centres. Refer to figure 1.3. Dwellings of these squatters, often built of rejected corrugated steel, canvas and blankets presented a poor picture of the state of Aborigines.

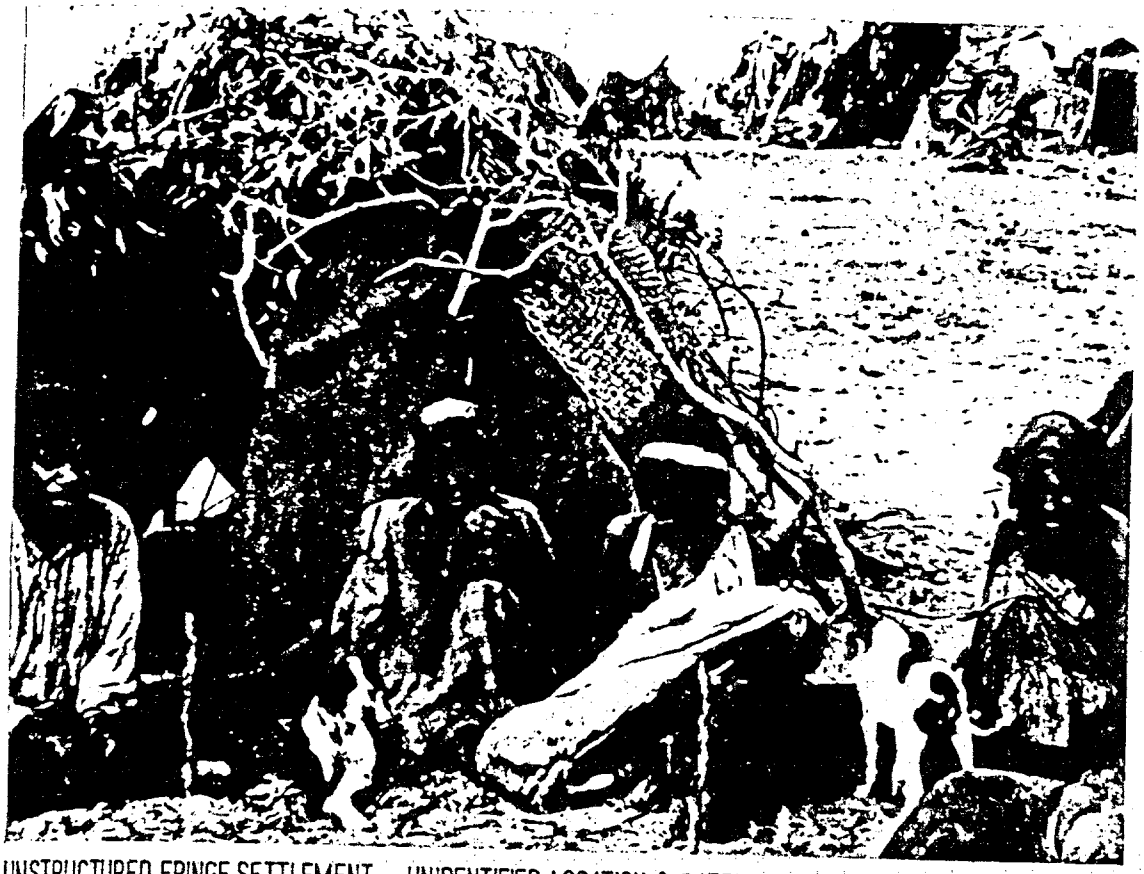
Due partly to the sudden sedentarization of Aborigines, these settlements took on a poverty striken character; at least in the eyes of whites. Visitors to these settlements were shocked by what was perceived to be conditions of extreme poverty and neglect.

After the Second World War, governments started to take a serious interest in Aboriginal Affairs. Consistent with Assimilationist policies, Aboriginal housing was designed along transitional lines. Housing was seen as a significant mode of converting black into white. Aboriginal families were expected to progress through stages of transitional housing. In many cases, little care was taken in design for basic climatic and physical needs. Socio-cultural needs were almost always ignored. Consequently, the houses were most unpleasant to live in.

Both the poor standard of the houses and the poor fit to Aboriginal needs produced feelings of frustration and confusion among residents. In response to these feelings, most inhabitants were seen to neglect or even abuse their dwellings. Aborigines rarely 'progressed' toward European type housing. Transition programmes were almost always unsuccessful, due to the nature of the programmes themselves. The Senate Select Committee on Aborigines chaired by Senator N.T. Bonner commenting on transitional housing has written,

> *The committee has concluded that 'transitional' is simply a euphemism for 'substandard'.* (8) p 174

Transitional housing remained the central theme of design of settlements into the 1970s. Reduction in government expenditure by conservative governments ensured a contin-



UNSTRUCTURED FRINGE SETTLEMENT - UNIDENTIFIED LOCATION & DATE photo : J.O.L.

STRUCTURED SETTLEMENT - STRADBROKE IS. 1891 photo : J.O.L.

FIGURE 1·3 ABORIGINAL SETTLEMENTS AFTER EUROPEAN CONTACT

uation of many problems including those noted by the Senate Select Committee. Low quality housing based on suburban ideals was typically provided on Aboriginal Settlements through the 1970s.

Calls from anthropologists, sociologists and architects during the 1970s have resulted in a change in direction for some Aboriginal housing design. Anthropological research and studies by the R.A.I.A. instituted Aboriginal Housing Panel have led to experimentation in this field. Designs have been proposed and implemented with varying degrees of success, and conscious attempts have been made to consider more closely the socio-cultural needs of particular Aboriginal groups.

This more sympathetic trend should continue although restricted government funding for Aboriginal welfare has created a problem. Limited budgeting demands very generalized housing design, leading to simplification of the complexity and variety of needs of different non-urban Aboriginal groups.

1:05 TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL CULTURE

INTRODUCTION

Aboriginal customs and lifestyle developed over 40,000 years. After only 200 years of European contact, this life-view remains alive in the consciousness of most descendants of the native race of Australia. Any study of appropriate housing for persons of a particular culture must necessarily take cognizance of that culture.

Amos Rapoport of the University of Sydney is an internationally respected architectural writer on the cultural implications of housing design. His writings have clarified the design link between culture and housing (10) (11) (12). He has written,

> *The key to deciding how to build seems to be an appreciation of socio-cultural variables. One*

needs to begin by understanding the culture, world view, value, social organization, symbol systems and the like of those for whom one designs. (11) p 297

An appreciation of the world view of the Aborigines is a necessary tool for designers of housing for this group.

Many elements of traditional life-view and values have significance for contemporary housing design. Particular Aboriginal ideas on the environment, on built structures and on religion and family may have serious ramifications with respect to housing design.

This section views this culture in a general manner. As a universally applicable quality, Australian Aboriginal culture bound these people with their lands in a vast tapestry of social and religious colour.

THE SPIRITUAL ENVIRONMENT

Religion

The Aborigines were a deeply religious people in many aspects of their life. This has been established by many respected authors including Rapoport (12), F.D. McCarthy (13) and R.M. Gibbs (14). The following discussion is based on the writings of these authors.

Aboriginal spiritual life was on a very high level, with a well refined but extremely complex pattern of religious belief. Mythological meaning was attributed to many elements of life, and of the environment. Traditional myths and magic were handed down through generations, largely through dramatic and musical performance at special ceremonies and in informal camp life. Performances were known by heart, and were often performed on sites which were attributed sacred significance.

Tribal elders held principal responsibility for passing on these traditional ceremonies. All members of Aboriginal groups participated though, even if only as spectators.

Initiated men, as well as women and children all had clearly defined religious roles, within the religious framework.

Religion was the primary life force in Aboriginal society. Author, F.D. McCarthy has said,

> *.... his (the Aborigine's) religion explains the origin of life itself and of his tribal customs, the source of his supply of food and raw materials, and the mysterious world beyond the comprehension of his scientific or general knowledge. To him it is a religion of great sanctity, inspiring in its mythology and songs, and impressive in its often colourful ceremonies .... It becomes a most important part of the adult life of men, demanding a great deal of time and energy in the enactment of ritual ...., and an absolute faith in the efficacy of the beliefs and ceremonial activities.*
>
> *(13) p 115*

Dreamtime

The Dreamtime is the most significant concept in Aboriginal mythology. Myths describe occurences in the Dreamtime - a period at the beginning of time, but which still exists now. The world was a great flat plain until the creative spirit-heroes rose from their sleep to reshape the world and all nature (14).

These many spirit beings did not die but merged with nature taking the form of animals, the hills, flora, water - many parts of the environment, since regarded as of sacred significance. These beings were seen as the source of life. All people and all animals were perceived as common descendants of these original beings (14).

Just as the spirit beings did not die, nor did the spirits of later Aborigines die. The spirit was seen to survive death and unite with the great creative spirits in nature.

It was these spirit-heroes who laid down the patterns of behaviour and ritual, which had to be observed to avoid lack of food and rain, and social decay.

The true quality of sacred life in traditional Aboriginal culture is not fully appreciated amongst white Australians.

THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Social Grouping

The Australian National Commission for UNESCO estimated that approximately 500 tribes of 100 to 1000 people comprised the population of pre-European Australia (15). Tribes may be defined as a collection of persons who speak one language, and who share a common culture. These were divided further into bands of several family groups, or clans of 50 to 200 people (15).

According to Australian anthropologists, N.B. Tindale and N. Peterson, the cultural geography or population groupings of Australia were far more complex and more nebulous than this (16)(17).

Tribal groups moved camp within a certain area. Peterson has noted that geographic boundaries were not strict. However, a tribe would certainly identify far more strongly with particular territory, especially in a sacred sense.

Every tribe had certain variations in dialect and social structure. Peterson identified 17 culture-areas of the Australian continent which had relatively clear cultural differences (17).

Intertribal contact meant that customs and words did spread across 'boundaries' between neighbouring tribes. Tribes within a culture area as defined by Peterson would have shared many cultural characteristics. Certainly clans within a tribe had very similar cultural and social traits. The cultural and social structure would have differed noticeably between the different cultural areas.

Further divisions within tribes have been identified. Tindale has defined hordes - groups of people whose members live together, and clans - groups of persons whose members claim descent from a common ancestor. W.E.H. Stanner, another respected anthropologist has agreed with these definitions (18).

Territory

Stanner has further established the concepts of estate and range - significant in discussion of Aboriginal movements (18). Each Aboriginal territorial group was associated with an estate - the special country of a patrilineal descent group. Range was defined as the tract over which these groups hunted and foraged. Stanner introduced a third concept. Domain referred to the land comprising the range as well as the estate - the total 'ecological life space'. Ranges of different groups did sometimes overlap, but only by common agreement (18).

No conflict occurred between tribes for the purpose of taking land from each other. This was for reasons of both a social and religious nature. Aborigines were generally non-aggressive people, though conflicts sometimes arose over social and matrimonial disputes. These were often resolved by extended discussion however. Generally, they were at peace with their neighbours as well as with the environment.

Family and Clan

The family life and social structure of traditional Aborigines has been studied by many writers including F.D. McCarthy (13), R.M. Gibbs (14), and R.M. and C.H. Berndt (19), upon whose writings the following discussion is based.

The entity of the clan is more significant than the immediate family in discussion on Aboriginal social structure. The clan was most important in Aboriginal society as

membership of a particular clan had particular social implications. While kinship links would have extended over a whole tribe, the strongest ties lay within the clan.

Individual rights were secondary to responsibility to the clan. This obligation to the kin community was unquestionable. Lack of adherence to this principle was rare and would result in severe punishment.

Members of a clan certainly had a strong bond to others and that group. In most cases, food and possessions were shared by clan members. Individual material possessions were usually of lesser or no consequence.

Kinship structure was complex. The nuclear family did not always exist as a distinct entity. The family was sometimes perceived as parents and their offspring with parent's siblings and their offspring. Another form of family involved a man and his several wives and their children. Grandparents were often also a part of the family group. The family group as discussed here is the group which lived together and slept together within the broader camp of the horde. This family almost always extended beyond the nuclear family. Refer to figure 1.4.

Social Roles

Aboriginal social structure was well refined with each group and individual having a clear role within the total framework. Children were allowed considerable freedom, but were encouraged to help women in food gathering and to play games. They learned adult skills directly through participation. For males, initiation ceremonies marked passing to adulthood at puberty.

These operations involved physical operations: circumcision or making of scars, but more importantly held great spiritual significance. Among certain Aboriginal groups, females were separated from the camp for a duration upon their first menstrual period, to mark adulthood. Males, and in some cases females left their parents camp when they were

admitted to the adult sector of the clan.

Great respect was always shown for the elders of a tribe. These were usually older men whose wider experience had given them a fuller understanding of the important social and spiritual patterns in the life of their people.

Tribes or hordes did not have a chief as government was anarchic. Where required, tribal elders would act as a council which would give respected advice on courses of action and on settling of disputes.

All members of the clan or horde had clear functional roles to perform within the group. This role definition in Aboriginal society meant that usually groups operated most efficiently. Peterson noted that this reduction in total effort, especially in food gathering, left an abundance of leisure time for Aboriginal groups (20). This time was spent on serious religious rituals, and more commonly, games and dramatic performances. Leisure activity was important in Aboriginal society.

Traditional Aboriginal community life was based on clear social and religious guide lines which affected all group processes.

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Nature

The Aboriginal people regarded themselves as at one with nature. Amos Rapoport has written of Aborigines,

> *Man did not differ in quality from other species but shared the same life-essence. (12) p 3-3-6*

The great spirit beings of the Dreamtime created the land and all nature including man during the Dreamtime as a total entity. Affinity with the land and all of nature was extremely strong and central to their whole being. The land was alive with the creative spirits. This view of life known as zoomorphism meant that man lived in near perfect harmony with nature. Anthropological writer,

F.D. McCarthy has written,

> *(the Aborigine) recognizes that the kingdoms of Man, animals and plants are on equal footings .... By their common origin, the human species and the animals and plants .... are brought into an intimate spiritual and economic relationship .... Man is thus classified as a part of the natural biological world.* (13) p 130

The landscape was perceived not only in visual terms but also in symbolic terms. Man and the environment were inextricably bound in a total composition with religion.

Aborigines' affinity with the environment has not been fully appreciated by most white Australians. Although dealt with briefly here, this concept has had great consequence.

Fire

Fires were an extremely important part of traditional Aboriginal life. N.M. Wallace funded by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, who studied a central Australian tribe described the Aborigines' perception of fire as parallel to the Europeans' perception of home. He has written,

> *The fire not the yu or wiltja (shelters) symbolizes the place of dwelling.* (21) p 144

Fire was, of course, a practical essential in Aboriginal life. Fires were used for cooking, warmth, light, insect control and manufacturing artifacts.

Rapoport has noted that in addition, fire had religious significance to Aborigines (12). Fires had social meaning, usually of a greater significance in a social context, than did shelters.

Several authors have noted that fire had deep religious and social significance to the native people.

R.M. Gibbs quoting from H. Basedow who had studied traditional Aborigines in the 1920s has written,

> *The (Aborigine) looks upon fire as one of the great indispensible quantities of his social existance; it is the element which dispels evil from his camp; it is the means by which comfort and friendship are made accessible to him; it is his universal companion. More than this, it is the fire with its warmth, and its light, which draws individuals, families, groups, and tribes together, and through its agency and influence that social concourse is established which lies at the bottom of all conviality, oracular discussion and ceremony.* (14) p 33

Doctor Joseph Reser of James Cook University more succinctly has said,

> *The hearths in a camp are the loci of most important activities and social interactions.* (22) p 88

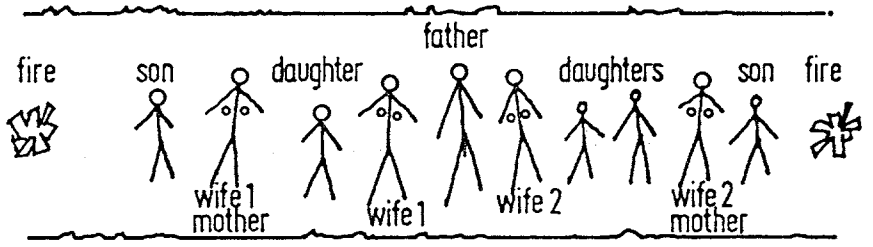
THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Camp Structure

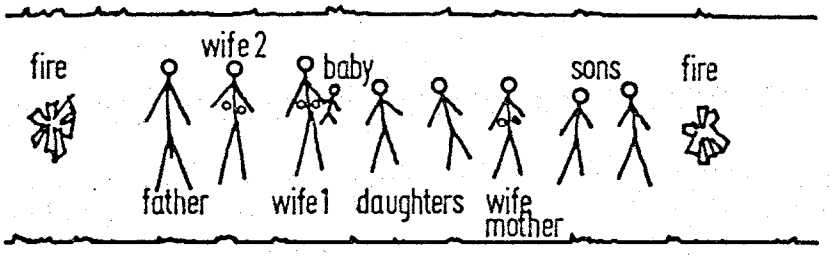
Traditional camp structure of Aborigines has been recently researched by Doctor D. Biernoff (23) and Doctor J. Reser (22) in Arnhem Land, and N.M. Wallace (21) in central Australia.

Traditional Aboriginal camps were structured on definite lines. Siting of shelters was related to environmental factors, but the primary consideration was kinship ties. The geographic location of family dwellings within the camp recognized the kinship allegiances of the group.

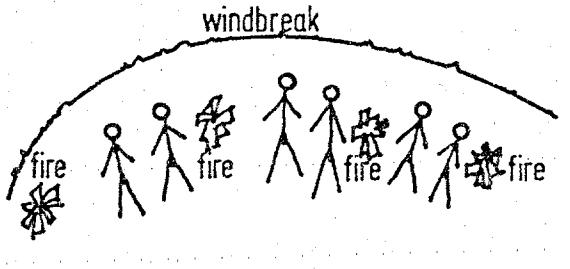
Families of an extended form shared domiciles. Sleeping layouts differed between groups. Biernoff and Wallace have recorded patterns of Arnhem Land Aborigines (23)(22). Refer to figure 1.4.



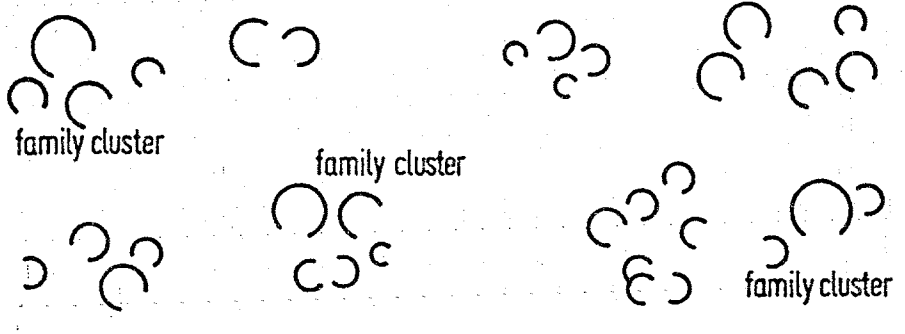
A. SLEEPING PATTERN - ARNHEM LAND FAMILY



B. SLEEPING PATTERN - ARNHEM LAND FAMILY



C. SLEEPING PATTERN - ARNHEM LAND SINGLE MALES



D. CAMP LAYOUT - ARNHEM LAND FAMILY GROUPS

FIGURE 1·4 TRADITIONAL DOMICILIARY LAYOUTS - FROM BIERNOFF (23) AND WALLACE (21)

Camps were thus structured not physically, but along conceptual lines. Doctor Reser has written,

> *(the camp) while being a relatively unstructured and fluid space in the sense of architectural features, is nonetheless very clearly articulated in a psychological sense.* (22) p 79

Doctor J. O'Connell of the University of Utah has conducted fieldwork in central Australia. He has written,

> *The spatial distribution of households in a cluster may appear to be random or haphazard, but in fact represents a sensitive measure of inter-household economic relationships.* (24) p 107

Shelters and especially fires defined family area. Subtle ground markings as well as established social practices defined privacy zones. All community members understood and observed an etiquette of approach to another person's zone. Aborigines had strong feelings of personal space. These points have been discussed by architect, P. Hamilton (25).

Privacy was not only achieved by architectural barriers, but also by strict codes of ethical conduct. Almost all activity was performed in visual openness. Excretory and sexual activity were usually performed in private.

Families lived together until the sons and daughters reached puberty as stated earlier. The males would then camp with single men in a special zone, and in some cases the girls would camp with single women. The camp of the single men and that of single women were distinct from the family zones.

Camp structure was never static. Moves within the group resulted from changing relationships including marriages and disputes. Death of mature people meant that the whole camp would move to another site. This was the main reason for relocation of camps. Groups would move camp for several other reasons including food and water requirements, hygiene and for spiritual reasons. These points have been established by many writers including Hamilton (25) and Wallace (21).

Basically camps were flexible and changing, but structured along clear lines.

Shelter

The following discussion on traditional Aboriginal shelters has been derived largely from two references, one by Doctor D. Biernoff of Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education (23), and the other produced by the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement. This government publication has drawn from two early century writers W.E. Roth and D.F. Thomson (26).

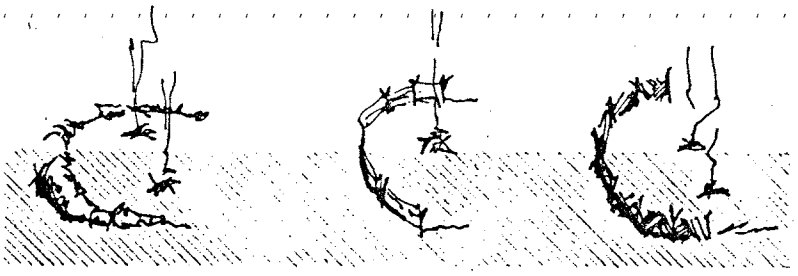
As noted earlier, Aborigines did not establish residence of a permanent nature. Shelters were usually temporary structures. Generally the Aboriginal people did not develop advanced technical skills in building construction as this was not necessary.

They were a physically hardy race, well adapted to the environmental conditions their particular region presented. Aborigines coped with extremes of climate with little shelter from the elements and with little clothing (4).

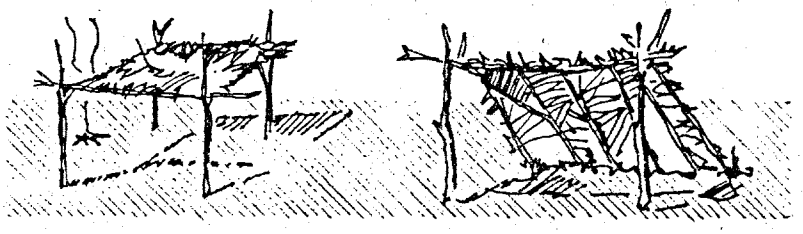
Aborigines built a large range of shelters, usually of a temporary nature. Refer to figures 1.5, 1.6 and 1.7. The construction of these shelters depended on several factors, including situational and climatic factors. Availability of materials and perceived length of stay were also important variables.

Different Aboriginal groups necessarily had different ways of satisfying shelter requirements. These differences arose principally from the range of environmental conditions in Australia. Available construction materials differed between coastal regions, grasslands and desert regions.

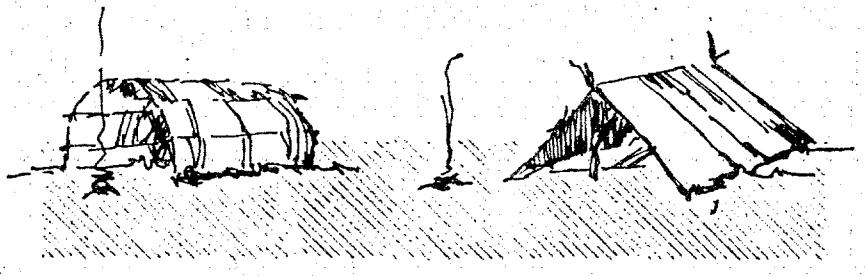
Almost all shelters were built from tree branches and foliage, bark or grasses. In unusual cases, rocks and clay were used for a degree of permanence. Terms used to describe traditional shelters include gunyah and mia-mia.

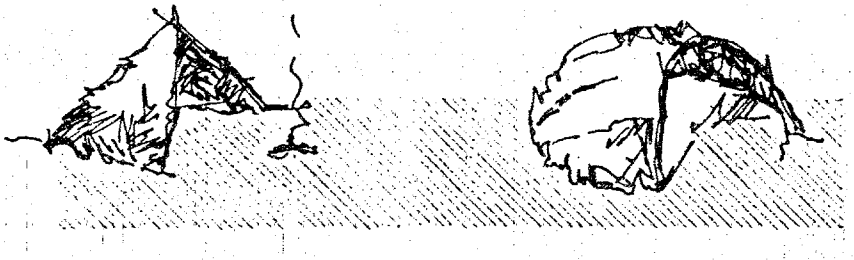


WINDBREAKS

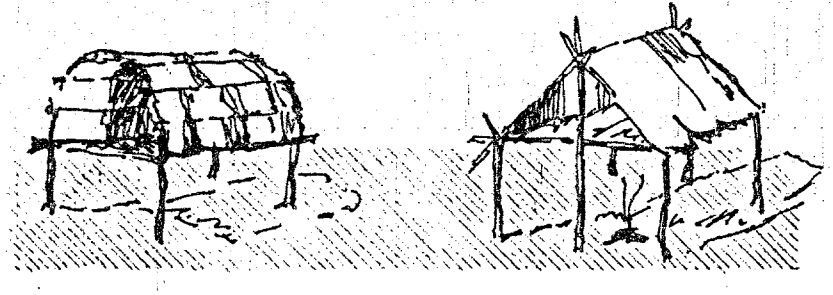


SHADES





HUTS



PLATFORMS

FIGURE 1·5 TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL SHELTERS - FROM BIERNOFF (23) AND D.A.I.A. (26)

BARK HUT - KEPPEL IS.

photo : J.O.L.

BARK WINDBREAK/SHADE - BURPENGARY 1889

photo : J.O.L.

FIGURE 1·6 TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL SHELTERS

CONSTRUCTING SAPLING DOME HUTS - ATHERTON AREA photo : J.O.L.

GRASS DOME HUTS - ATHERTON AREA photo : J.O.L.

FIGURE 1·7 TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL SHELTERS

Doctor Biernoff writing on Arnhem Land Aborigines, has referred to yu, windbreaks and wiltja, shades (23). Most Aboriginal shelters may be regarded as one of these or a combination of both.

Among Aboriginal groups, it was usual for families to sleep in the open behind a windbreak. These were curved in plan with the convex side towards the prevailing winds. Fires were usually built within these for warmth and for other cultural reasons.

Wiltja were in many forms including domes, pitched roofs, flat roofs, vaults and tripods as shown in figure 1.5. These huts were erected by both women and men from materials available near the camp site.

Very little symbolic importance was placed on built structures in Aboriginal society. In most cases these dwellings were merely temporary protection from the elements. Sanctity was usually reserved for the natural factors of their existance rather than the man-made structures. This lack of reverence for artifical forms is peculiar to Australian Aboriginal culture.

1:06 THE CULTURAL GAP

INTRODUCTION

The true significance of all factors discussed under traditional Aboriginal culture to housing will be clarified when considered in relation to Western culture. In comparison to Western society, the Aboriginal life-view differs in the extreme. This cultural gap may be regarded as the base problem in Aboriginal housing, and will be examined in this section.

The European way of life contrasts very markedly with that of traditional Aboriginal society. So vast are the differences that people from each race have experienced great difficulty in accepting the validity aspects of the other group's culture.

Social writer Kenneth Maddock has said,

> *. . . . Aborigines and (European) Australians certainly do not share a view of life, and their traditions of conduct and organization are very different.* (27) p 177

Many aspects of the two cultures are incompatible. This extends to most aspects of social structure, world view and general perceptions and values. These will be examined in this section.

Discussion in this section is derived directly from the findings of the previous section on traditional Aboriginal culture.

The question has arisen on just how significant traditional Aboriginal values are in contemporary Australian society. One eminent writer, Professor R.M. Berndt of the University of West Australia has pointed out that,

> *No assessment has yet been made of the actual number of Aborigines who may be regarded as being traditionally orientated.* (28) p 25

Other writers have concluded that the traditional values of the native race are even now, after decades of contact, very deeply rooted in Aborigines. It is not well recognized that the traditional perceptions are alive even among partly 'Westernized' Aborigines. Doctor H.C. Coombs has written,

> *Surviving Aborigines rarely if ever live wholly in accordance with their traditional way although its influence remains powerful and often unsuspected.* (4) p 30

These people have shown a most powerful and sincere reluctance to abondon all of their traditional lifestyle, and with it their identity. Many Aborigines have tenaciously held to time-established customs despite most intense social pressure from white Australians over many years, as has been noted by the Senate Select Committee chaired by Senator N.T. Bonner (8).

This section leads to establishment of a model of the culture gap for use in transition stress considerations.

This model will be based on the following broad areas:-

i social organization

ii environmental perception

This model is finally presented in figure 1.8. These areas for discussion deal with factors of the cultural gap which have ramifications in Aboriginal housing. Chapter Two will cover the relevance of the cultural differences to transition problems for Aborigines in housing.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Several factors in the cultural gap concern the structure and organization of society and behaviour within this structure. Particular aspects include perception of family, social administration, and the importance of materialism and religion in society.

Kinship

Clear dissimilarity exists between the dark and white races with regard to family structure and marriage. European Australian society virtually demands that the nuclear family stays together as a single unit in one house, separate from other families. Aboriginal communities have always existed with a composite framework of kinship. All members of a clan are related. Traditional camps were structured with special regard to these relationships. Aborigines have, in most cases, regarded a wider group than merely the immediate family as close kin which should share accommodation. Refer to figure 1.4.

Another point of contrast with white social structure concerns family evolution. Among most Aboriginal groups males, and in some cases females, left their family at puberty for separate accommodation. Usually in white society adolescents have remained with their family.

Reverance for the aged members of groups was strong in native society. The same cannot be said for white Australian society. Great respect was shown for the experienced opinions

of Aboriginal group elders. White society tends to disregard and neglect its aged.

Marriage practices differ between the races. Marriage in traditional native society in fact contravenes Western understanding of human rights. Polygamy, although not universal among tribal Aborigines, was widely accepted and practiced. Another point in conflict with Western law was the practice of promising of spouses. Young children in some Aboriginal groups were promised for marriage for social reasons.

The prominent differences between the cultures with respect to perception of family is a most noticeable part of the very wide gap between black and white races.

The clan is still a significant concept among many non-urban Aboriginal groups. The territorial concepts of estate, range and domain have lesser relevance to remote Aborigines today.

Government

Social administration in Australia is based on representative government on a hierarchical basis. This is completely foreign to Aborigines, whose traditional groups functioned under a passive anarchy. Traditional customs and manners provided behavioural guidelines. Group decisions were often established through extended discussions arriving at a group concensus. The life experience of elders was respected at such discussions but there was no strictly graded organization. Doctor H.C. Coombs has noted that all activity was performed on a 'together and equal' basis (4).

The white public usually shows a general apathy for social issues. Policy is determined by responsible elected persons, usually with a lack of interest from the broad community.

Aboriginal social emphasis lay with the community as opposed to the modern European (post French revolution) precept of individual rights. Obligations to the tribal kinship group

or clan were unquestionable. Western society encourages the right of the individual to challenge tradition and government.

Materialism and Religion

White Australians are materialistic as a whole. Capitalism is opposite to the traditional Aboriginal group sharing maxim. Doctor H.C. Coombs noted Aborigines' lack of reverence for material possessions in traditional society and among traditional groups (4).

Religion was central to the whole existence of Aboriginal groups. By contrast, in white society, material possessions may be regarded as more sacred than spiritual observations. Spiritual existence is not universally accepted in white society. Atheism is not rare. While many white Australians claim to accept religious philosophies, religious practice is commonly restricted to one day of the week in a single location.

To aboriginal people, all elements of existence had symbolic significance, and many elements were seen to possess a spirit. The whole environment and its inhabitants were related to sacred concepts. Religious rituals occupied a considerable proportion of these people's time and consciousness. In comparison to Aboriginal culture, modern Western culture may be seen to be relatively devoid of sacredness and spirituality.

Aborigines spent a minimum of time on economic activity. Leisure time dominated their existence and in fact overlapped with the work of food gathering. Western society is fully based on the work ethic and those who do not accept this axiom are frowned upon. Many non-urban Aborigines with traditional based attitudes find this ethic difficult to accept.

Social organization of both races is based on very complex procedures. Compounding this, concepts vary considerably within the groups. The broad discussion preceding does not reach these complexities, but does indicate the far reaching

dissimilarities between the races.

Social Manner

The Aborigines were a mild race living in harmony with nature and were generally at peace with each other. Disputes were rarely serious, as social customs usually guided parties to a peaceful settlement. Etiquette of a personal nature was simply adhered to by all, allowing a rather calm lifestyle.

This differs from Western based society where in many cases social processes are highly stressful. Open disputation is common in white Australian society, where individual actualization is often a more important factor than consideration for external groups. This is foreign to Aborigines, among whom community obligations were the major social force.

Aboriginal perception of time differed from our present concept as noted by A.K. Eckermann of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. She has written,

> *(Aborigines) have no conception of time in a European sense.* (29) p 288

In industrial or technological society, the hour is closely monitored. A wasted day can be seen as disastrous. To the Aborigine this was certainly not the case. If an activity lasted a week instead of a day this caused no concern or surprise. The passage of time was seen as of little significance relative to the distant past of the Dreamtime.

The future held little significance for traditional Aborigines. While daily life was rich with variety, little would change with time. The future was not an important concept. To white people, conversely, the future is always considered. Concern for possible future trends or events is a major factor of the European consciousness. Proof of this lies in the financial success of insurance companies.

Privacy needs differ between the races. Aborigines in most circumstances did not seek physical barriers from others

whereas whites almost always do so. This perception of personal space and privacy is obviously culture based. These two cultures can be seen to contrast in the extreme on this point.

As a generalization, the Aborigines were a reserved, unhurried, peaceful people. These traits are not as applicable to Western society as a whole.

ENVIRONMENTAL PERCEPTION

Aborigines lived with the environment. They have always perceived themselves as at one with nature - in total harmony with the environment and its elements. Environmental perception by the Aboriginal race related to religious considerations as religion dominated Aboriginal thinking. The social and physical aspects of the land are the basis of most white people's attitudes.

While traditional Aborigines placed great sanctity on their surroundings, white Australians have generally had a lesser regard for ecology than economy. The land has been seen by whites as a source of material gain, to be achieved despite potential environmental damage. Conflict of attitudes between races is very evident here. The harsh attitude of whites is not compatible with the attitude of sympathy evident among Aborigines.

Fire and built structures are major aspects of environmental perception to be considered. Fire was of prime practical and symbolic importance to Aborigines. By comparison fire has little symbolic importance to whites. Its significance in white society is restricted mainly to industrial applications of combustion - in strong contrast to the Aboriginal view.

To white Australians the built environment is a principle social variable. A person's home is the major contributor to his sense of identity. Buildings are the primary status symbol of individuals and groups in Western society. Aborigines had little regard for artificial structures. Built dwellings had little or no social importance in Aboriginal

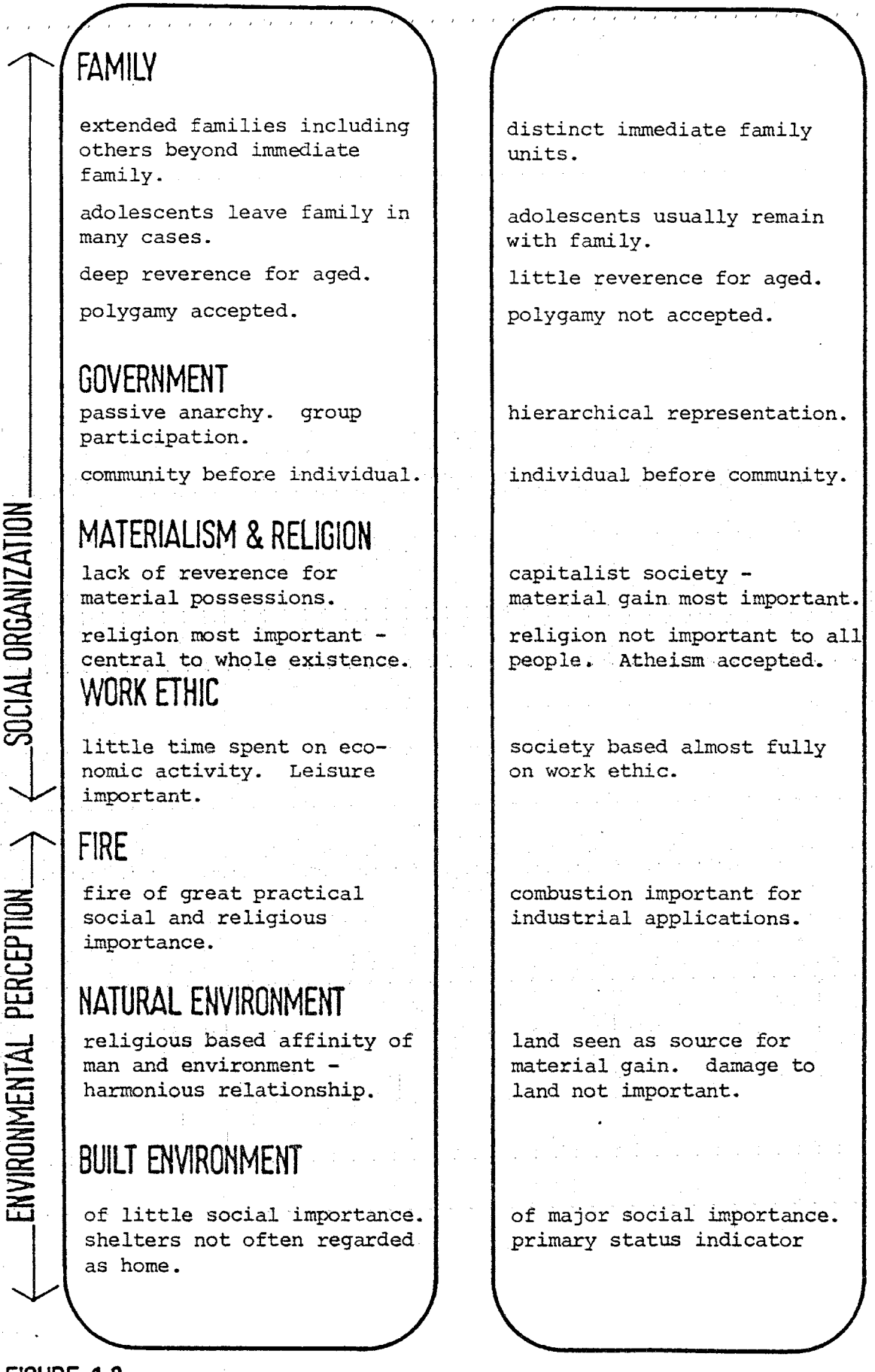


FIGURE 1·8 MODEL OF THE CULTURAL GAP

society.

The fundamental differences between the races with regard to environmental perception are major contributors to the culture gap.

1:07 THE IDEOLOGY OF TRANSITION

Since white settlement, pressure has been applied to the native race to adopt the new people's lifestyle. European society and culture has been forced upon Aborigines, both through whites' egotism and through a genuine naive desire to improve the 'primitives'.

Doctor Coombs has pointed out that it is curious that in a period where the quality of life in Western society has been seriously questioned, this lifestyle has been forced upon persons who do not wish for it. Generally, European Australians have been ethnocentric in assuming superiority of their own culture over that of the native race (4).

This leads to the question on what determines that one society is better or worse than another.

Following evolutionary theory, one would presume that the superior would dominate and subdue the inferior (30). Later would be seen to be better. This argument is very simplistic. What is required to evaluate the relative worths of two societies is a set of criteria for gauging quality of life.

Doctor K. Maddock of Macquarie University referred to A.L. Kroeber, a respected American sociological writer of the 1930s who proposed a set of criteria for comparison of societies (27). In abbreviated form these were:-

i degree of acceptance of superstition and magic
ii non-accumulation of technology
iii the use of body in ceremony (decoration and scarring)

If these criteria were accepted as determinants of the relative worths of cultures, the Aboriginal culture would be

judged as inferior. Consequently for one to protect this culture could be criticized as opposition to progress.

Examination of these criteria leads to questioning of their validity. Writings since Kroeber have established sounder criteria for debate than those of this writer of the 1920s.

A. Maslow, a popular writer on socio-psychology, and C. Doxiadis, leader of Ekistics, each formulated a set of criteria to be used in study of social forces (31)(32).

P. Hamilton, an Australian architect who has completed extensive Aboriginal research also proposed a set of criteria for gauging the 'quality of life' with respect to Australian society (33).

The following determinants have been derived from consideration of Maslow's heirarchy of needs, Doxiadis' Ekistic elements and Hamilton's criteria.

i Physiological Satisfaction
- dietry, nutrition
- sexual expression
- freedom from disease, pollution
- physical comfort

ii Social Quality
- egalitariansim, freedom for expression
- clarity and acceptance of social processes

iii Psychological and Spiritual Satisfaction
- sense of purpose in broader contexts of society and religion
- opportunity for self expression

These criteria, derived from well respected modern writings, can be seen to have greater validity than those presented in Maddocks's text.

Judgement based on any criteria is certainly very subjective. Use of a fair set of criteria may not give a fair result as any judgement is necessarily culture based. Fair consideration of the above criteria may easily conclude that Aboriginal society is superior to European society. All such comparative debate is not productive and this

thesis will not enter into this subjective area.

The foregoing line of reasoning has established that European society can not be judged as superior to Aboriginal society by any careful and critical observer.

As it cannot be claimed that quality of life in European society is superior to the Aboriginal lifestyle, forced transition cannot be justified. Assuming non-superiority of either race, it is evident that the decline of either culture will not improve society generally.

This preceding line of argument establishes the moral reason for non-destruction of Aboriginal culture.

Another argument for this retention of the native culture is the global need for cultural diversity. A. Rapoport has written,

> *We assume that our own culture is superior to all others - yet nature likes to keep very diverse species for stability.* (11) p 295

Diversity and flexibility can be shown to be traits of an adaptable and stable system (34). Loss of clarity of cultures is therefore not in the better interest of mankind as a total system.

Doctor K. Maddock has concluded that,

> *From the stand point of human liberation the world would be poorer if Aboriginal society collapsed totally ....* (27) p 194

Retention of Aboriginal culture is imperative.

The realistic view of the current Aboriginal situation recognizes that it is idealistic to assume that Aborigines can exist as they did before white settlement. In most cases, their tribal lands, so significant in their traditional consciousness are lost to them. Modern Aborigines are separated from most of what was their culture.

Among leading thinkers and even in government circles a policy is encouraged where at least some of the Aboriginal culture is preserved. While a majority of the environmentally related aspects of Aboriginal culture are lost, much

of traditional Aboriginal thought and attitudes remain alive in the Aborigines of today.

Recognition of the worth of such attitudes and outlook is necessary. Total destruction of this culture is not inevitable.

Assimilation of forced transition of Aborigines to white Australian culture has no ideological validity.

1:08 CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER

Chapter One has provided a basis for understanding of the character of the Aboriginal race. The character or cultural traits of Aboriginal society have been shown to be very different from European Australian society. These differences have historically caused considerable hardship. Housing for Aborigines has typified the problems which evolve from this cultural gap between black and white Australians. The precis of the traditional culture of Aborigines and the discussion on the ideology of transition showed that this culture certainly deserves great respect.

It has been established that an appreciation of traditional native culture (and of cultural differences with whites) is a necessary tool for the design of dwellings for these people.

These cultural differences have been summarized in Chapter One by presentation of the Model of the cultural gap, which was derived from the precis of traditional Aboriginal culture.

This Model will develop the discussion on the hypothesis by leading to discussion on the stress factor, a key element of the hypothesis.

CHAPTER TWO

To change the unchangeable
The gum cannot be trained into an oak.
Much that we loved is gone and had to go,
But not the deep indigenous things.
The past is still so much a part of us
Still about us still within us.

Kath Walker (1)

DESIGN VARIABLES FOR TRANSITION

2:01 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER

This chapter will view specific problem areas in Aboriginal housing, both from the designers' viewpoint and from that of the Aborigines.

Chapter Two is titled 'Design Variables for Transition'. Transition stress is a basic concept of this chapter. This is discussed specifically in relation to Aboriginal housing. Change from the traditional camp situation to European type housing will be shown to involve certain stresses for remote area Aborigines.

This Chapter extends the concept of the cultural gap to establish a model of transition stress in Aboriginal housing. Transition stress is a direct result of aspects of the cultural gap. Thus the secondary model is derived directly from that of the cultural gap presented in Chapter One.

Architects involved in this field have experienced certain difficulties which shall be discussed in the first section of chapter Two. As the role of the architect is the central theme of this thesis, it should be emphasized that the full extent of this thesis is of concern to architects involved in Aboriginal housing. An understanding of all points discussed in Chapter One as well as this chapter is necessary for designers of Aboriginal housing.

The theoretical findings of this chapter with regard to transition problems and architectural consultation will be used later to draw conclusions from practical findings. This exercise will be completed in the concluding chapter of this thesis, and will lead to a final discussion on the hypothesis.

2:02 TRANSITION STRESS

STRESS

Psychological stress has been defined and discussed by many authors, the most respected of whom include Doctor H. Selye (35), Professor C. Spielberger (36), and T. Cox (37). These writings have contributed to the following discussion. Stress can be defined as the environmental or social circumstances that place demands on the individual. It is also regarded as the emotional reactions experienced in these situations.

Stress exists in many complex and dynamic forms. Usually it is experienced where the individual is unable to adapt to altered or imperfect conditions.

TRANSITION STRESS

All stresses could probably be regarded as transition stress, as all stresses are a result of uneasy adaptation to changed circumstances. For this discussion, transition stress is defined particularly as the emotional strain placed on an individual as a result of significant changes of circumstances.

This concept has been examined extensively by British psychologists, J. Adams et al (38). They have established that individual stresses result in response to novel situations. They have written,

> *Transition, regardless of what sort they are, represent a disruption in one's routines. Hence,*

they cause a disruption of equilibrium. (38) p 43

This disruption applies a pressure for a person to change. Psychologist L. Phillips has recognized the problem of failure to adapt to changes. He has said,

> *This failure occurs when the complexities of a changing social context impose demands for effective response that are beyond the individual's adaptive resources. (39) p 5*

Philips further stated that ineffective and inappropriate responses to new environments express the frustration of the individual who cannot cope (39).

Doctor J. Reser of James Cook University has discussed transition stress with respect to Arnhem Land Aborigines (22). He has seen 'environmental control' as the key concept in this discussion. The perception of self as the centre of control of one's circumstance is the basis of this concept. Where one is able to anticipate events, and react accordingly, strain of change is minimal. This perceived control of one's circumstances is soon recognized by an individual. Should he lose this perceived ability, especially where change occurs rapidly, stress will occur. This stress can be of severe proportions.

Reser's paper agreed with the earlier work of J. Adams et al (38) on the above points. Adams et al used the term 'learned helplessness'. They have stated,

> *Where a person perceives that his attempts to control a situation are being ineffective ... (then) the person tends to stop trying to exercise control ... (and) tends to experience heightened anxiety, followed by depression. (38) p 58*

Environmental control is affected by one's familiarity with one's surroundings. When placed in alien circumstances, especially involuntarily, a degree of transition stress is experienced. The security and comfort of familiarity are lost.

The individual soon learns whether or not he is able to

control a novel environment. Where unable, symptoms of transition stress surface. Transition stress does carry documented symptoms. J. Adams et al have noted that,

> *... changes in life pattern cause stress; and stress has physiological as well as psychological consequences.* (38) p ix

Doctor Reser has extended this. He has said,

> *.... The documented clinical implications of not being able to adequately control environmental events include ... anxiety, neurosis, emotional stress and subsequent psyiological stress, learning and motivational debilitation, acute apathy and withdrawal, hypertension and reduced resistance to disease.* (22) p 72

Apathy especially is a well recognized part of transition stress.

Popular author Alvin Toffler has referred to a concept related to 'environmental control'. In his book 'Future Shock' (40), he used the term 'stability zones', in discussion on the socio-psychological effects of rapid change. These were seen as the major elements of one's existence which must necessarily be retained among one's circumstances to maintain the feeling of security and comfort. Loss of stability zones leads to instability of mind with associated symptoms.

As discussed by Philips (39) and Reser (22) human beings are able to adapt to new circumstances. Toffler (40) saw that humans can thrive on change. However, they are not infinitely malleable. Accommodation of changing conditions will induce stress where the change is too great and too rapid. Excessive change produces transition stress.

CROSS CULTURAL TRANSITION STRESS

The concept of transition stress has great relevance to discussion on Aboriginal affairs. Transition across cultures must necessarily involve a significant degree of stress.

This stress has also been referred to by some writers as 'culture shock' (41). Traditional Aboriginal culture and Western culture differ in the extreme as shown in Chapter One. Thus forced change from one of these cultures to the other has involved a very high degree of transition stress.

Pressured change to a very different culture is regarded as an example of transition stress of the utmost degree. Native Australians have individually, and as a whole, been forced through massive changes. Professors R.M. and C.H. Berndt regarding Aboriginal groups have noted that,

> *All are being drawn, in one way or another into the wider Australian society.* (42) p 69

Usually little or no concern has been given to just how comfortably Aborigines can accept change, or to providing a gentle and gradual transition. Anthropological writers Waterman and Waterman have written,

> *Aboriginal culture is so rigidly conservative that rather than change, it falls completely apart in the culture contact situation .... The works of Berndt, Elkin, Hasluck, Lommel and others tend to show .... that Australian Aboriginal culture has changed and is changing rapidly, often with results detrimental to the Aboriginal.* (43) p 102

Aborigines in passage from traditional existence to a Western based lifestyle have experienced a whole complex framework of obvious and subtle behavioural and social stresses. The level of stress has been severe in many instances of this transition for two reasons. Firstly it has been due to the vast difference between the two cultures, and secondly due to the conservatism of Aboriginal society as noted by R.M. and C.H. Berndt. They have written,

> *Aboriginal traditional life was generally conservative in orientation with an overt emphasis on non change.* (42) p 76

Many observers have suggested that the majority of Aborigines may eventually accept most aspects of Western culture.

As a result of the cultural gap, as illustrated in Chapter One, and of Aboriginal conservatism, many Aborigines will experience considerable transition stress in this change. Aboriginal housing is a major factor of this cross cultural change and will be discussed in the following section.

2:03 TRANSITION PROBLEMS IN ABORIGINAL HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

Aborigines have experienced certain stresses associated with cultural change. Stress has occurred as a result of vastly changing circumstances. New conditions have proven to be incompatible with Aboriginal psychological comfort requirements. The study of housing is directly concerned with these requirements.

This section examines the problems associated with cultural change within the housing context. The concept of transition has been employed, but not because all Aborigines are seen to be undergoing a transitional process. Rather it is used as consideration of the transition concept will clarify the distinct housing requirements of all non-urban Aborigines.

Thus, the transition considerations of this thesis should be read with the understanding that the discussion has relevance to all remote Aborigines whether undergoing cultural change or not.

Change from the traditional camp situation to Western styled housing will involve a certain degree of transition stress. It is clear however that while housing can produce stresses, it is only one part of a whole transition process. Transition problems evolve from the whole spectrum of change factors in the move to a European lifestyle. Housing is a single factor, though clearly a major one. Doctor J. Reser has written,

The fact that Aborigines are under this acute stress has often been noted, and is in any case obvious. That this fact has considerable relevance for the circumstances under which they are housed has not yet been fully appreciated. (22) p 77

Living in European style housing contrasts in the extreme with the camp based lifestyle of traditional Aborigines. Movement to the more artificial situation of Westernized housing has required marked changes in life patterns. Concurrent with this change, Aboriginal people have experienced transition stress; often of a high intensity. Doctor J. Reser writing on Arnhem Aborigines has said,

The people in these communities are under unprecedented and unrelieved transition stress .... The contemporary world has moved in with a vengeance. (22) p 77

N.M. Wallace has also referred to the socio-cultural problems involved in this transition for the Pitjantjatjarra tribal Aborigines of South Australia (21).

Obviously, residence in a dwelling could not totally destroy the life view and values of an individual. However, housing certainly can place restrictions on social and personal patterns. These factors will be discussed in this section.

Where patterns of a familiar lifestyle are severely restricted by a dwelling, significant stress will result if the occupant remains in that dwelling. It has occurred that Aborigines have not accepted housing provided, for this reason.

The concept of 'environmental control' discussed in Chapter One has special relevance to Aboriginal housing. Movement to a European house detaches the resident from his surroundings. Deprivation of desired sensory information from the environment can produce profound psychological effects as discussed by Ittelson et al (44).

This has been confirmed by P. Hamilton, who has added social

processes can also be undermined by a novel environment (45).

Perceived loss of control results in the stress factors outlined in the previous section. Anxiety, withdrawal; neurosis and severe apathy are typical traits of Aborigines living in many European orientated settlements, which have been misinterpreted as laziness and lack of intelligence.

Adjustment problems for non-urban Aborigines moving to Westernized housing relate to the cultural gap, as outlined in Chapter One. To live in a house, the Aborigine must necessarily adopt certain white customs. This forced acceptance of aspects of white society necessitates adjustment, and therefore will lead to significant stress of transition.

The following text is derived directly from factors established in Chapter One in discussion on the cultural gap. These are social organization and environmental perception. Figure 2.3 is a representation of transition stress in Aboriginal housing, and is presented at the end of this section.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The social organization of Australian Aborigines differs vastly from that of European Australians. This was discussed in Chapter One. Problems of adjustment to whites' style housing may result partly from Aboriginal attitudes to social organization, family, materialism and the work ethic.

Family

As discussed earlier, Aboriginal perception of family differs from the Western norm. White society demands that the nuclear family of mother, father and offspring remains together in a separate dwelling. European housing has evolved to support this pattern of social organization; that is one family, one house.

Aboriginal perception of family differs greatly from the above. The family in almost all cases extended to include cousins and grandparents or aunts and uncles. This family group was only a part of the larger kinship framework of the clan. In the traditional camp situation, these kinship ties were reflected in the structure of the camp. The extended family group usually would camp in close proximity. These patterns were discussed in Chapter One.

Modern day remote Aborigines on government settlements have often been provided with a dwelling designed to house a nuclear scaled family. It is possible that the traditional pattern of sharing accommodation has had to be discarded.

Otherwise, as is quite common, great strain has been placed on the house as relatives have arrived to share residence. Services, including garbage disposal, plumbing and sanitation have been strained and may have failed due to overuse.

Of significance also is the process of family development. Whereas white adolescents have remained with their family, traditional Aboriginal adolescents left for a separate dwelling. At puberty, males left to live with the single men, and sometimes females with the single women. Among some tribes separate 'houses' were also provided for all menstruating women.

These patterns still exist in some remote areas. They may be restricted by village settlements provided on urban ideals.

Another pattern still evident among Aborigines of outback areas is the practice of gathering in social groups in open spaces. People gather to gossip, sing and to observe other settlement activity. Refer to figure 2.1.

All of the above aspects of traditional lifestyle are still an important consideration for many Aboriginal groups.

Where these factors are required, but not catered for in

EXTERNAL SLEEPING - LA GRANGE - KIMBERLEY REGION W.A. photo : A.D.A.

GROUP - LA GRANGE - KIMBERLEY REGION W.A. photo : A.D.A.

FIGURE 2·1 ABORIGINAL GROUPING AND EXTERNAL ORIENTATION

housing, transition stress can certainly result.

Materialism

Materialism is another factor of social organization which leads to adjustment difficulties. Contrary to Western social attitudes, Aboriginal society rarely placed significance on individual material possessions. Most material goods were shared amongst the clan, and in fact were few. This group sharing attitude is still strong among very many non-urban Aborigines today.

The salient ramification in housing concerns ownership of a dwelling and its contents. Any Aborigine who has taken ownership of a European house has experienced considerable pressure from his kinsmen to share all he possesses. As noted above, unexpected pressure has been applied to the house and its services, and degradation has resulted. Refer to figure 2.2.

This non-acceptance of materialism is a major preventative force against change towards European style housing for Aborigines. It is difficult for European Australians to appreciate that many Aborigines do not aspire to ownership of a house, as most whites aspire to this virtually above all else.

Work Ethic

Another facet of social organization of importance in transition, is the work ethic. Western society is based on the ethic of working to gain an income, and maintaining a dwelling. As discussed in Chapter One, this differs with the outlook of Australian Aborigines. Economic activity occupied a minimal proportion of the day in the traditional groups' life. Their life was alive with games, dance, plays and other leisure activity largely based on their religious outlook.

With the influx of Western ideas and processes, and the demise of traditional culture the opportunity and motivation

DEGRADED DWELLING - YUENDUMU N.T.

photo : A.D.A.

DAMAGE PROOF DWELLINGS, LITTERED SITE - YUENDUMU N.T.

photo : A.D.A.

FIGURE 2·2 MAINTENANCE PROBLEMS

for most of this activity has been lost. Remote Aborigines today are generally still not motivated to gain employment, especially not in a white man's world. Ownership of dwellings along similar lines to white Australians is thus not achievable by most of these people.

Another facet of the work ethic concerns maintenance of a house. Members of a white family devote much of their time to upkeep of their house and yard. This is almost an unquestionable part of the social organization of white society.

An obvious area involving transition problems for non-urban Aborigines has been maintenance of housing. They have been presented with the unfamiliar responsibilities of cleaning and servicing an urban type dwelling. Often they have been either overwhelmed or disinterested in such activity. As services, including sanitation, and finishes have run to disrepair, the morale of the occupants has worsened. Refer to figure 2.2.

Designers of housing have often allowed for the maintenance problem by providing 'indestructable' dwellings. This approach avoids the real issues of Aboriginal housing and may be regarded as unsympathetic.

ENVIRONMENTAL PERCEPTION

Australian Aborigines have a markedly different perception of environment and spaces from European Australians, as discussed in Chapter One. Transition stress partly results from aspects of environmental perception concerning both the natural and built environment, and attitude to fire.

FIRE

Fire has always been of prime importance in traditional Aboriginal life. The fire not only had wide functional value but also religious and social significance. Any restriction on use of fire among most modern day non-urban Aborigines has had strained consequences. Many

white solutions for housing of Aborigines have had no allowance for a fire, showing extremely poor understanding, even of this fundamental part of the native race's existence.

A house which places restriction on the use of fire can be a cause of great anxiety. The fire has been used for such a complex variety of functions that the simple provision of a formal hearth has even proven inadequate.

An indirect, and less significant effect of settlement living concerns shortage of firewood. Traditionally the native race was nomadic, and thus sufficient firewood was always available. Fixed communities have experienced problems of wood supply. People have even gone to the extent of removing timber from their dwelling to feed fires - a very significant comment on the relative importance of fire and the dwelling.

Natural and Built Environment

The relative import of the natural and built environment differs greatly between the black and white cultures of Australia. This difference is certainly a salient element of the cultural gap. To whites, the natural environment is seen as a source of material gain. Aborigines identify themselves with nature in spiritual terms.

The built environment, of great social significance in Western society, mattered little in traditional Aboriginal society. This aspect of Aboriginal consciousness pervades among a considerable number of remote area groups. Consequently many non-urban Aborigines have had no desire to live in European houses at all.

P. Hamilton has noted that some Aborigines have wanted European style houses but when these have been given they have found them unusable (45).

The white man's house is an enclosure. It separates the occupant from the surrounding environment. This is acceptable, in fact desirable in Western society, but is not in

Aboriginal society, as has been established earlier.

Loss of relationship to the land can be considered the major problem in change to a formal house. Affinity with the environment is certainly a powerful force in the Aboriginal consciousness even today. Any barrier in this relationship must have detrimental psychological repercussions. Containment in a house is totally unacceptable to the traditional Aborigine. It has been a cause of stress to some degree for many non-urban Aboriginal persons. Often Aborigines have chosen to use external spaces for most activity even for sleeping. Refer to figure 2.1.

As noted earlier, enclosure leads to deprivation of sensory information received from the environment. Separation from the sun, wind, clouds and the land causes anxiety and frustration for the Aboriginal person. Restriction of social interaction by enclosure is recognized as a major defect of many housing solutions.

Separation from the land is the primary transition problem in the area of environmental perception. A secondary constraint felt by housed Aborigines is the inability to communicate with neighbours. Restriction on intragroup discussion and observation is not in accord with Aboriginal attitudes. Privacy by physical separation was not a quality of most traditional camps. Many remote area Aborigines still have a wish to be able to observe the activity of the rest of their group.

For this function to continue in modern settlements, flexibility is required. The built environment of many settlements has not allowed desired group processes to be freely maintained. Doctor M. Heppell made a comment, pertinent to this point, writing on an Aboriginal village in West Australia. He has said,

> *An interest in monitoring the activities of one's neighbours is not peculiar to the Looma community. It is an activity which had an important traditional function in all Aboriginal groups. It need not be frustrated by living in a house.* (3) p 29

A third problem for Aborigines housed with European standards concerns inflexibility. European type housing involves formally designed spaces structured for particular uses. Aboriginal groups have experienced difficulty in adjusting to this restrictive lifestyle. Traditional camps were extremely flexible, adjusting to suit the kinship network of the clan, with changes in family structures. Certainly, this aspect of traditional life has been virtually destroyed in the move to white man's housing.

EASING TRANSITION

Sympathetic consideration of the above aspects of transition during the design process will ease the imposed stress of housing. With a patient and careful study of the special needs of a particular group, the architect has the potential to overcome many of the problems discussed in this section.

Again the point should be made that generalization must be avoided. The discussion on problem areas in this section covers broad areas which have been evident in past solutions

Remote area Aborigines will be greatly helped in housing by architects' studying the details of potential transition stress in each particular group. This extent of involvement is not always practical. However, an appreciation of the transitional problem areas will aid the architect in design of Aboriginal housing. So prepared, he certainly has the potential to ease transitional stress suffered by Aborigines. Transition stress in Aboriginal housing is represented in figure 2.3.

2:04 THE ARCHITECT

INTRODUCTION

This section will examine the potential contribution from the architectural profession in the field of Aboriginal

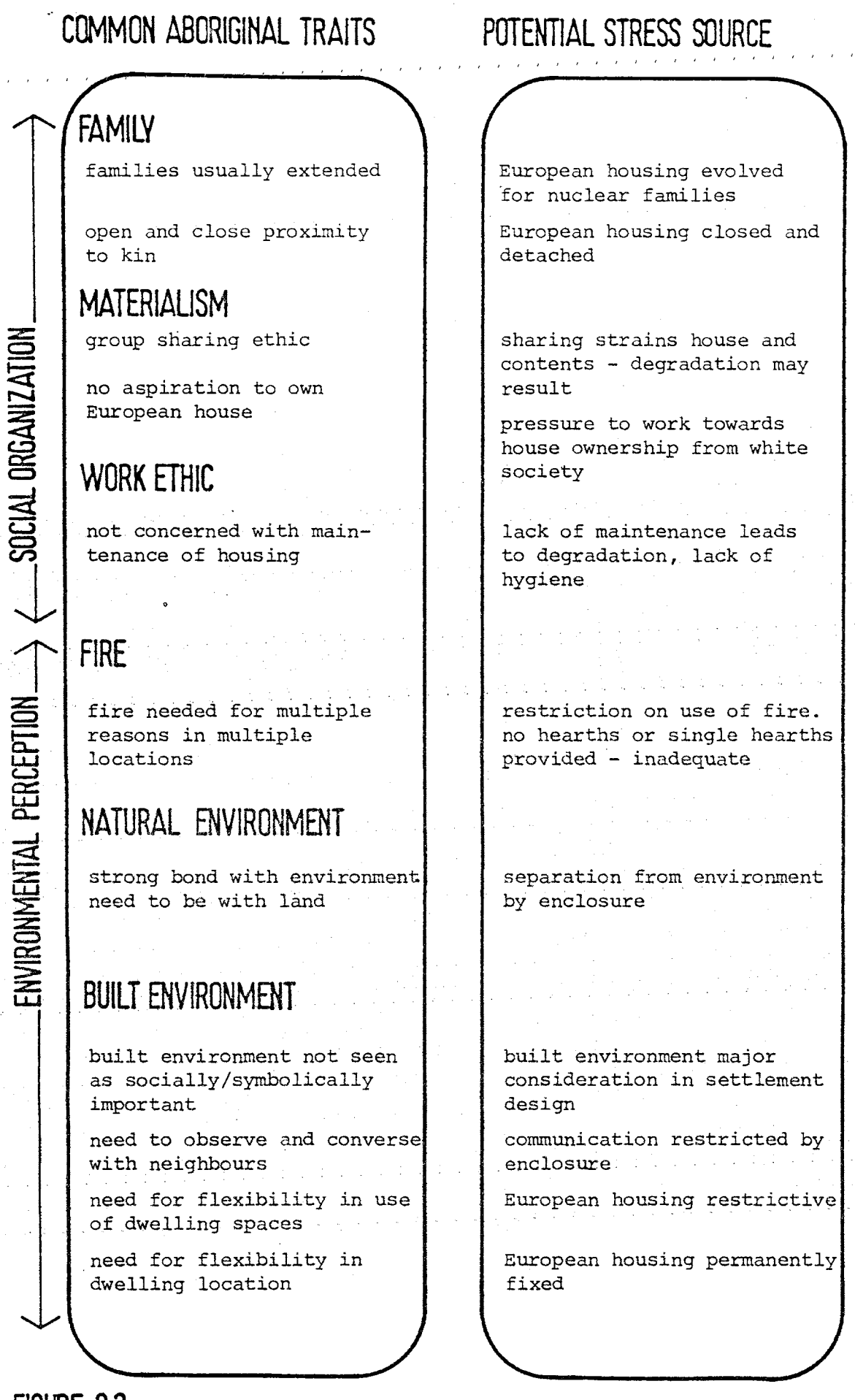


FIGURE 2·3 MODEL OF TRANSITION STRESS IN ABORIGINAL HOUSING

housing. Architects from both the public and private sector have been involved in this field. Rarely has this involvement been entirely successful. Architects have experienced difficulties in design for the culturally different. These problems, related to both consultation and design, will be discussed.

One quality of housing which is not specifically covered in this thesis is 'environmental control'. This aspect of shelter is well understood by architects and should be applied automatically in design. Previous sections have established the need for cultural considerations in housing design. This design factor will be referred to in this section.

The central theme of this section however is architectural consultation. This term refers to communication with the client, as well as brief preparation and design development.

THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF THE ARCHITECT

The architect should be the person best equipped to solve the problem of appropriate Aboriginal housing for outback areas. Especially with assistance from the anthropological and sociological professions, should the architect be able to offer improved solutions. His specialized skills and perception must be especially useful in this area.

Architects are supposedly trained to be flexible and broad minded in their dealings with clients. In theory, the architect has no pre-conception of a design. This quality is most desirable in design for the culturally different. It has been established by several authors including Heppell (2), Rapoport (10)(12) and Wallace (21) that Aboriginal persons have often required very different design approaches from the European norm. Creative thought is required to cope with this variation. Architects are, in theory, well equipped to follow this line.

Different groups of Aborigines necessarily require different design solutions. Architects are accustomed to wide

variation in client requirements, and should be prepared to handle the even wider variation in Aboriginal housing requirements. As he recognizes special needs in a design for any client, the architect must be capable of appropriate design for all individual Aboriginal groups.

In theory, the architect is capable of responding to all client needs. This talent should encompass far more than dimensional and numerical requirements. He should be able also to identify and respond to the socio-psychological needs in a client. Design for the culturally different extends this talent beyond the normal use. Professor B.S. Saini has written on this theme. He has said,

> *In its present form the architectural profession does not seem to be fully aware of the potential and the extent to which its members can contribute towards problems which are social ... rather than purely technical.*
>
> (7) p 782

The architectural profession has a potential role in Aboriginal housing, far greater than it accepts at present. With a greater empathy for Aboriginal values and housing needs, the profession has the scope to ease many pressures on Aborigines. Saini wrote,

> *.... the challenge is there ... to create, with sympathy and understanding, an environment in which this depressed group of people can grow up as proud citizens.*
>
> (7) p 782

Architectural skills associated with an understanding of certain principles of anthropology and sociology should have potential to provide very satisfactory Aboriginal housing solutions.

PRACTICAL OBSTACLES AND PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDE

Past and existing design processes for Aboriginal housing are far from perfect. Problems have arisen as a result of poor attitudes and understanding between white architects

and black clients. Dealings with Aboriginal clients have often been of a foreign nature compared with clients of the architect's own cultural group, with whom he is most familiar. As the architect necessarily has a different set of values from this client in this field, the preparation of a design brief often proves particularly difficult.

Almost all white Australians, including architects, have difficulty in appreciating Aboriginal values. To bridge the cultural gap certainly requires an open mind and a degree of humility. Not all people are suited to service the culturally different. Ability to communicate sympathetically with all Aborigines is not a trait of many European Australians.

Architects are sometimes regarded as rather arrogant and dogmatic; willing to force their own ideals on clients. This characteristic is not conducive to good design for any client, and most certainly not for those of a differing cultural group. Many Aborigines have a poor attitude towards white Australians. They have often been seen as very self assuming or even as oppressors. This view has been substantiated where the architect promotes an image of the 'white expert'. Consultation has undoubtably been unsuccessful with this relationship.

Architectural consultation has in fact been seen as a very significant problem in Aboriginal housing design. It is well recognized that communication has been the major obstacle in architectural liason with persons of the native race. This fault has often been mainly with the architect. Doctor M. Heppell has noted that,

> *Many failures, at least partly, have their source in the inability or unwillingness of a particular architect to listen to and act upon the instructions of his Aboriginal clients.* (6) p 3

It is interesting to note that Heppell's critical paper on architectural involvement with Aborigines has been withdrawn from circulation by the R.A.I.A. (45).

Doctor H.C. Coombs has written on consultations,

> *..... failure reflected an inability or unwillingness to establish communication with Aborigines and to give appropriate weight to those elements in their social attitudes which were unfamiliar or incompatible with our own.* (4) p 239

This communication gap is a derivative of the cultural gap. It can only be reduced by an understanding of the clients' culture, and of the cultural gap as discussed in Chapter One. A. Rapoport, writing on the ramifications of the cultural gap on the design process has said,

> *There is a cultural and communication gap between the designer and the user which makes it difficult fully to know the culture and its design implications in sufficient detail.* (10) p 299

Doctor M. Heppell also recognized this problem of the communication gap between architect and Aborigine. He has written,

> *When an architect consults with an Aboriginal community, a highly specialized European, trained to design houses but not versed in any way in communicating with or understanding people of an alien culture, and, indeed, quite often unsympathetic to the needs of members of different groups within his own culture, is expected to ascertain the complex requirements of a (culturally different) community.* (2) p 2

This suggests that architects have been insensitive to Aboriginal needs. Insensitivity can be seen to have resulted from a lack of knowledge and understanding of Aborigines.

P. Hamilton, an architect with many years involvement in Aboriginal affairs has pointed to a particular difficulty the profession faces. He has said that it is unreasonable to expect architects as a whole to be aware of the cultural

requirements of all ethnic groups in Australia. Specialization has been necessary even within the field of Aboriginal housing. Hamilton has also recognized the importance of brief preparation and inherent difficulties in this process (45).

Many Aborigines, especially of more remote areas, are not familiar with formal briefing sessions or interviews. Fixed appointments and timed meetings are not a usual part of the lifestyle of many of these people. Aborigines' differing perception of time and conversation processes must be appreciated by the interviewer if useful, honest data is to be collected.

A major problem in this regard is time involvement. As noted in Chapter One, Aborigines are generally less conscious of passage of time than are Europeans. Traditional Aboriginal decision making and conversation processes are of a different character from those of Europeans.

Architects on a typically tight schedule are not well accepted, as they may be seen to be hurrying decisions.

A further obstacle in architectural consultation is the Aborigines' narrow background. In many cases, a restricted past life experience is typical. Aborigines, like most whites, may have experienced only one lifestyle, and only one dwelling form. Their understanding of the consequences of accepting alternatives is limited. This is not a sound basis for decision making where complex architectural and technical variables are presented.

Simply because of a lack of experience, many Aborigines cannot be expected to appreciate the ramifications of decisions made in briefing sessions. A common problem has developed where people have been shown European type housing. When asked if that is what they desire, answers have been eagerly affirmative. This enthusiasm has not been based on experience of varied housing solutions. Transition stress symptoms have developed in many cases from factors which the new occupants could not have been expected to predict.

Consultation with Aborigines is complex and may be demanding.

The architect must recognize that he is not totally competent to crystalize a perfect solution from his pedestal. Detailed consultation with Aboriginal groups and with sociologists and anthropologists is the starting point. Most significant is the need for sympathetic involvement with the users.

Doctor M. Heppell has said,

> *The most important issue of all is whether the architecture should be initiated by the architect or should flow from the community itself.* (6) p 10

Acceptance of the different needs of this client group is a difficult, but necessary factor in design of housing for Aboriginal people. This requires tolerance as well as creativity and perhaps humility - qualities not evident in all architects.

GENERALIZATION

A strong tendency exists among white Australians including most architects to generalize in all affairs concerning Aborigines. Governments and the public have usually grouped all Aboriginal Australians together in assuming they have common attitudes, needs and aspirations. This blanket of generalization hides the true diversity of situations in which Aborigines live.

It must be made clear that Aborigines are all different and have differing requirements, just as do individuals and groups from any society. Doctor Reser has said,

> *Looking for a design solution to the 'Aboriginal housing problem' is simply a far too simplistic approach to a very complex set of problems ... Such a notion overlooks the radically different circumstances under which various Aboriginal groups live, and assumes a static time dimension.* (22) p 93

Architect J.M. Kent has written,

> *The production of a standard design to meet all situations in such a broad field has proved virtually impossible.* (46) p 14

Two types of generalization can be seen to exist in the field of Aboriginal housing. Firstly, governmental provision of housing in many instances has merely followed suburban housing ideals. The attitude which leads to provision of cheap metal huts 'because the blacks cannot maintain a proper house and will only remove timber for fire' shows great ignorance and lack of sympathy. This approach involves generalization which reveals a degree of ethnocentricity.

In contrast, the second type of generalization involves non-racist attitudes. Where architects do consider special Aboriginal needs, these are often interpreted too broadly.

Different Aboriginal groups have special outlooks which sometimes do not compare with those of other groups. Attitudes to sacred sites, intertribal relationships, authority, employment and so on may differ markedly between groups.

These differences are often not considered in housing design. Intrepretations of Aboriginal culture are often applied in a broad and inappropraite manner by architects. This 'romantic' approach has been noted by Doctor Biernoff who has seen potential pitfalls in such an approach (47).

Another complication concerns the assumption that all Aborigines need different housing from white Australians. This is not necessarily true. Hamilton wrote,

> *Some individuals and groups can be aspiring to become more Europeanized while others can aspire to become more tribalized.* (48) p 1

Some dark-skinned people wish only to live in suburbia and have no special needs different from their white neighbours. Many Aborigines wish to live a near traditional existence in outback Australia. These people

are quite sufficient. Aboriginal people are located at all different points along the line between these two extremes. Housing needs differ for virtually every one of these groups. This is a critical factor in any housing consideration and must be appreciated by the architect.

Another complication which prohibits generalization in Aboriginal housing concerns the changing needs of particular groups over time. Hamilton has noted,

> *.... that the situation is not static, needs are changing constantly ... It is not enough simply to understand the situation at one point in time.* (48) p 1

It can be seen that design of housing for Aboriginal people is not a straight-forward matter. Variables are of a socio-cultural character and are dependent on time. Architects involved in this field need to recognize the inherent complexities.

2:05 CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER

Chapter Two has examined the theoretical difficulties in design of housing for Aborigines. The approach to this study has been an examination of the variables in the design process. A detailed view of problems of transition for Aborigines has led to an understanding of the theoretical housing requirements of Aborigines.

Stress has been suffered by Aboriginal groups living within an environmental and social structure foreign to that with which they are familiar. This emotional strain is due partly to the factors covered in this chapter. The values and perceptions of the Aboriginal race still differ greatly from those of white Australians, even after almost two centuries of contact. The Aboriginal life view remains strong today in most remote parts of Australia.

Doctor R.G. Hansfield of Sydney University has written,

> *... we know of no way to change basic value orientations embedded in basic personality structure. The result of this impasse is that we can do no more than ameliorate the situation for Aborigines by developing as many stress relieving situations as possible.* (49) p 287

The concept of 'stress-relieving situations' is most applicable to Aboriginal housing. Certainly there are clear transition stress factors in this field which are avoidable. Many design factors, given some consideration, can lead to a relief of the personal and social strain involved in housing of Aborigines.

The use of the concept of transition has not restricted the relevance of this study to Aborigines undergoing change. The concept of transition has been employed to lead to an appreciation of the design variables in Aboriginal housing.

A strong responsibility lies with the architectural profession in Australia to aid this relief. The profession is equipped with the skills to solve the problems of appropriate Aboriginal housing, despite the many barriers which exist against satisfactory architectural consultation.

The theoretical findings of this chapter will be referred to in the final chapter of this thesis. These findings will be compared to the practical findings of the following chapters.

This chapter has related specifically to two elements of the hypothesis. Firstly, the significance of the element of stress for Aborigines in modern circumstances has been established. Secondly, the role of the architect has been extensively examined.

CHAPTER THREE

In my dreams I hear my tribe
Laughing as they hunt and swim,
No more woomera, no more boomerang,
Children of nature we were then,
And I see no more my tribe of old.

Kath Walker (1)

CONTEMPORARY SETTLEMENTS

3:01 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER

This chapter examines examples of non-urban Aboriginal housing and settlements, leading to conclusions of a practical nature. Examination of practical research is presented as a flow on from Chapter Two. Theoretical findings of Chapter Two will be tested by the practical research examined in this chapter.

Initially the role of settlements for these people within Australian society will be discussed. The perceived aim and function of Aboriginal settlements is varied.

To define the aim and fuction of all Aboriginal settlements in a broad statement is not possible. Many urbanized government settlements have maintained a role of assimilation. White people of nearby towns see many settlements merely as segretory institutions.

Conversely, in some remote areas, Aborigines lead a hunter-gatherer lifestyle. Many Aborigines live a traditionally based existence either on an unsettled reserve, or in connection with a government settlement.

This chapter will discuss research completed on Aborigines in terms of housing design and role. Firstly, the performance of housing provided by the Queensland Government is noted. Settlements such as Looma, West Australia, provide

Aborigines with inexpensive shelters originally intended to allow some of the traditional lifestyle to survive. Looma village is discussed in the following section of this chapter.

A housing solution for another West Australian settlement, Laverton, is then examined. These studies provide a base understanding of role definition of existing Aboriginal settlements and of problems encountered in design of housing within these policies. Both the Looma and Laverton architects made genuine attempts to provide appropriate housing for Aborigines which have not been entirely successful.

Aboriginal settlements of a more traditional nature are finally examined with reference to directions in housing of these people. The locations of the Aboriginal settlements referred to in this thesis are shown on figure 3.1.

3:02 THE ROLE OF ABORIGINAL SETTLEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

An understanding of the role of contemporary non-urban Aboriginal settlements is a starting point to design consideration for remote area Aboriginal housing schemes. Settlements are a central factor in any study of Aborigines. Their social significance in academic terms has been clarified by Doctor H.C. Coombs. He stated that,

> *Settlements are important - because more than a third of Aborigines live on them, because within them the influence of traditional ways of life persists most strongly, and because they express in concrete form the purposes of official policies.* (4) p 99

Official policies for Aborigines and their settlements have changed considerably in modern times, and definitions of the role of Aboriginal settlements today are

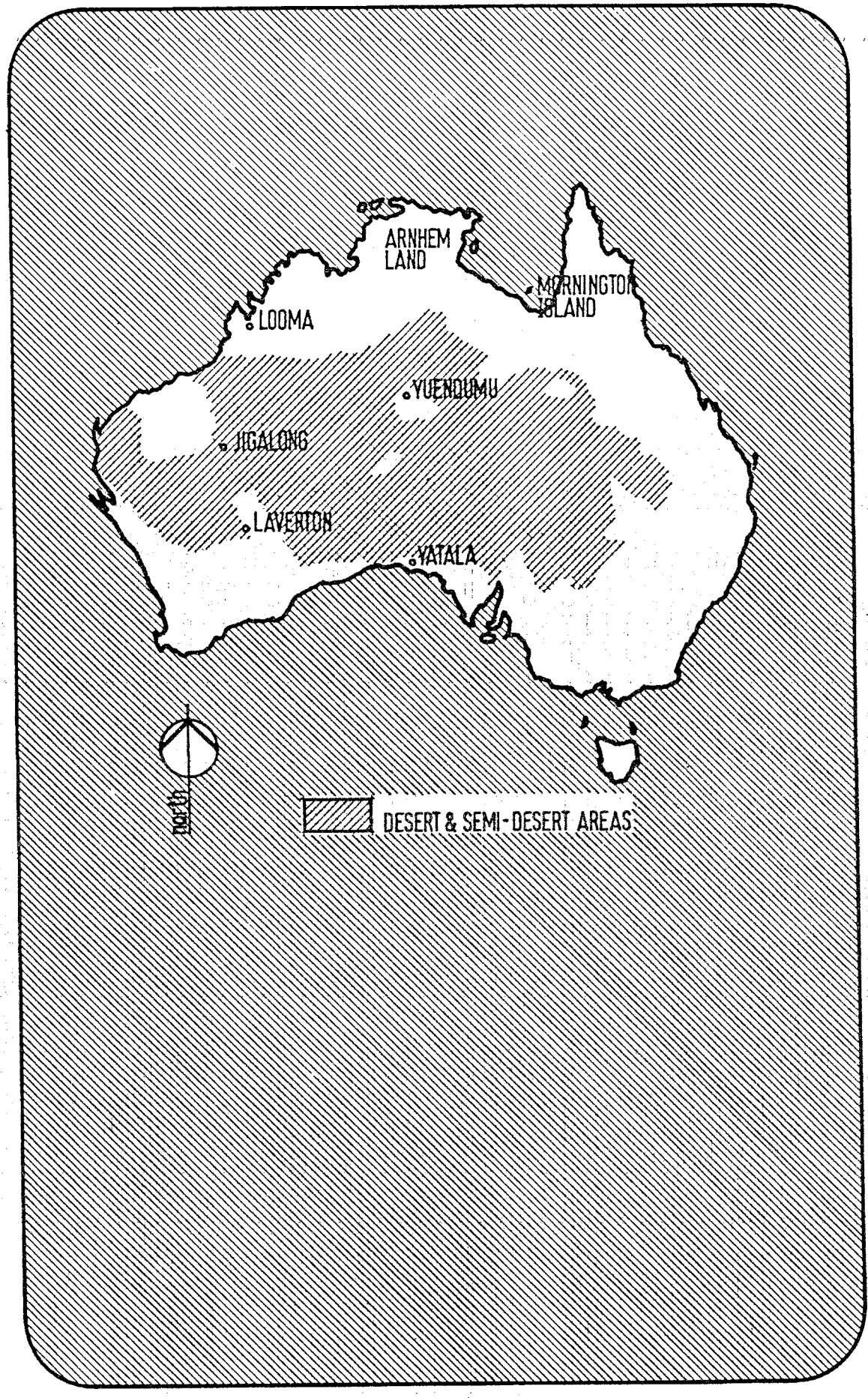


FIGURE 3·1 MAP SHOWING SETTLEMENT LOCATIONS

varied between differing political and academic groups. This role can be seen to evolve from the expressed needs of residents and from official government policy. These two definitive forces, representing pressure from black and white Australians respectively have shaped the role of Aboriginal settlements within the broader context of multicultural Australian society. The defined role of settlements has determined the type and quality of housing offered to Aborigines.

Residents needs and aspirations result from their personal perception of their past culture, their present quality of life and their potential future.

For the majority of non-urban Aborigines, the traditional culture still holds some significance and remains as a strong influence on their lifestyle and patterns of behaviour. The future hopes and quality of life desired by Aborigines varies considerably between different Aboriginal groups, depending largely on degree of acculturization.

The second factor mentioned above of official government policy is also a prime determinant of the existing aims and functions of Aboriginal settlements. Government policy defines the direction of development of Aboriginal communities within the broader context of Australian society. These policies may be seen to represent the opinion of the majority of the voting public. Since 1967 Aborigines have had the right to vote but government policy directions have necessarily taken greater account of the opinions of the white majority.

The role of Aboriginal settlements, as determined by both blacks' and whites' attitudes can be seen to have defined the approach to design of these communities and of the architecture within them.

Aboriginal housing designers are accountable to government bodies in political and financial terms. Beyond this, they should be morally accountable to the wants and needs of people within Aboriginal settlements.

THE HISTORICAL AND PRESENT ROLE

Originally government Aboriginal settlements served to collect dark people together to affect a separate administration of the native race. Separation of the natives from 'civilized' white society was seen as desirable by early administrators. The settlements were of a strict administrative nature and usually unsympathetic to the inmates needs. Total condemnation of early settlements is invalid however. Through the establishment of these centres many people survived the European onslaught that otherwise would not have done. Early government settlements assumed the roles of protection of the native people and of segregation of the races. These early governments assumed total responsibility for control of Aborigines (50).

Aboriginal people from many tribes were collected together within these settlements, producing severe tensions. Tribes of non-sympathetic backgrounds or outlooks, when placed in undesirable proximities, often would react negatively, and sometimes violently.

Many early settlements were established and administered by Christian groups. Their aim naturally was to convert the 'primitives' to their theological viewpoint. Professor C.D. Rowley, a leading author of several anthropological and social writings on Aborigines, questioned the validity of this aim. He noted that the Church people met with surprisingly little success in this endeavour (51). The work of Doctor R. Tonkinson of the Australian National University also refers to the non-success of theological conversion missions for Aborigines (52).

The 1930s brought the start of a change in the functional direction of Aboriginal settlements. An assimilationist approach as outlined in Chapter One was introduced in some communities. This trend continued until after World War II. During the 1950s assimilation became official government policy. More emphasis was placed on the potential social equality of Aborigines. This was intended to emerge from their social education mainly within Aboriginal settlements.

Both J.P.M. Long and Professor C.D. Rowley, writing for the Social Science Research Council of Australia noted that the government settlements were administered along very strict lines (50)(5). Aborigines were subjected to a control otherwise reserved for criminals and the insane in Australia (50)(5).

White supervisors assumed extensive power over the Aborigines. Very little administrative responsibility was given to Aborigines. Difficulty was experienced in changing roles. Where settlements had been merely segregative institutions, the legislated change to integrative communities proved to be slow and difficult.

This modification of approach was instituted gradually over the 1950s and 1960s in recognition of both Aboriginal and white pressure. The new definition of the role of settlements did little to allieviate the prejudiced view of white administrators, however. Previously the attitude to Aborigines had been like as to criminals. A newer perception was formed of Aborigines being that of 'apprentice whites'.

J.P.M. Long has noted that,

> .... *it was still generally accepted ... that settlements provided the most appropriate and effective means of changing incompetent Aborigines into competent citizens.* (50) p 180

Long has written that over the years the subordinated Aborigines have tended,

> *to become very passive, unable to think for or to fight for, changes whose need they are content merely to grumble about.* (50) p 181

As discussed in the previous chapter, passivity and apathy have resulted where people perceive that they are not in control of their own circumstances. In many cases an attitude of 'hostile dependancy' developed among Aborigines. This attitude and other attitudes resulting from subservience, including apathy, are certainly not conducive to the stated role of integration.

Another effect of the supervisory function in these settle-

(4) (27) (28) (51).

Definition of the ideal role of Aboriginal settlements is subjective. Disagreement on Aboriginal policy is evidenced in the continuing public debate on Aborigines' place in today's society. Many Aborigines have chosen to follow a European type lifestyle. Those people of concern to this thesis, who live in remote areas, are tending to regain a self respect for their Aboriginality.

It seems that a general trend exists where traditional Aboriginal culture is being accredited greater respectability. Proof of whites' improving attitudes lies with results of referenda, Acts of Parliament, court decisions, press editorials and generally a growing support for Aboriginal movements.

Housing and settlement design is clearly not the only factor involved in this trend. Perhaps of primary importance is the fact that Aborigines have expressed their intention to be free from subordination to white Australians, especially concerning administration of their own communities.

Basically, housing and community design should allow the users to conduct their lifestyle in a manner harmonious with their existing socio-cultural needs. Where this is achieved in Aboriginal settlements, residents have greater potential to develop a self respect through recognition of self identity, and through a strengthening of their social fabric.

3:03 QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

Queensland has more Aboriginal residents than any other state or territory of Australia. These people are located mainly in the non-urban areas of the state. Refer to figure 1.2.

Therefore examination of housing for Aborigines of Queensland may be regarded as crucial to this thesis. As will

ments is the committment to efficiency. Professor C.D. Rowley has written that usually the white administrators of Aboriginal communities were more committed to efficiency of production, cleanliness and order than to the personal development of inmates (51). Long has provided a satisfactory explanation for this approach. He has said that it is understandable as the practical problems of maintenance and neatness are quite tangible and manageable compared to the intractability and obscurity of human problems (50).

Newer attitudes to the ideal role of Aboriginal communities have been suggested by leading academics, Aborigines and even governments. Ideally many of the problems outlined above can be overcome with a change in direction.

THE IDEAL ROLE OF SETTLEMENTS

Author J.P.M. Long, writing in 1969 saw two possibilities for the future development of the role of Aboriginal communities (50). Firstly, settlements could give far greater encouragement to Aborigines to leave to join the wider Australian community; otherwise, the existing government settlements should develop in a direction where Aborigines manage their own affairs - a suggestion which preceded the policies of self-management of the 1970s.

Long saw both potential roles as idealogically acceptable. The existing role where whites supervised segregated communities was described as unacceptable. The institutional character of the existing government settlements was not seen as conducive to production of circumstances for either of his suggestions (50).

Prominent writers in the field of Aboriginal Affairs are now encouraging the second of Long's suggestion. Academics and policy makers generally believe Aboriginal settlements' primary aim should be to encourage a respectable self perception or identity. This is seen as achievable through preservation of traditional Aboriginal culture to some degree, and also through encouragement of self management

be shown the Queensland Government has made little effort to cater for the socio-cultural needs of these people. For this reason the subject of housing in the state of Queensland will be given a brief treatment in this thesis.

The Queensland Government has maintained a policy of Integration of Aborigines.

> *Departmental policy continues to foster the integration of Aboriginal and Islander citizens into the mainstream of Australian society.* (53) p 3

Houses for Queensland Aborigines are provided through the state Department of Aboriginal and Islander Advancement. Government settlements of the state, house Aborigines of various cultural makeups. The D.A.I.A. acts as the client department to the state Department of Works - Architectural Branch. Thus the State Works architects are restricted in housing design to within the confines of directions from the D.A.I.A., which in turn must act along the policy direction of the elected Government of Queensland (54)(55).

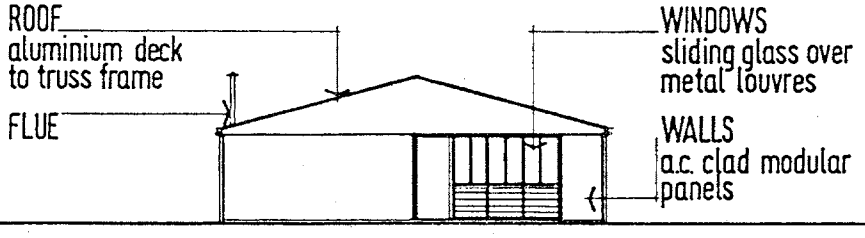
HOUSING DIRECTION

Housing for Aborigines of Queensland Government settlements has necessarily followed the policies of Assimilation and Integration (54).

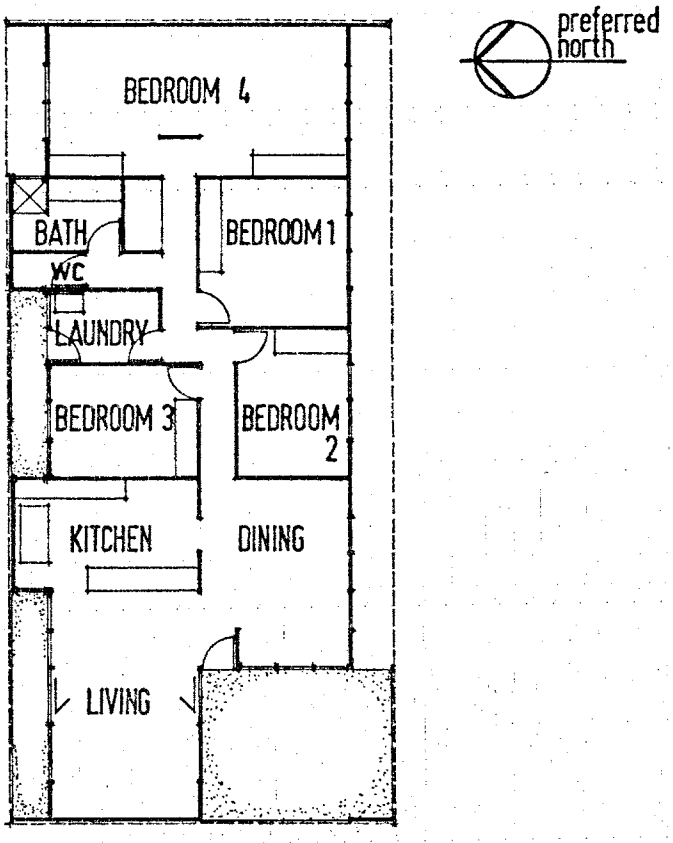
State Works architects have designed houses for the D.A.I.A. intended to guide Aborigines to a European lifestyle. Aborigines of that state have been provided with houses of standard designs, based entirely on Western ideals.

No doubt, certain Aborigines of Queensland have happily accepted housing of the type provided in that style. It should be clear however that for many non-urban Aborigines, European housing would be inappropriate. Governmental housing design in the state has not been entirely inconsiderate of peculiar Aboriginal requirements, however.

One recent house design by the State Works Department is illustrated in figure 3.2. This house is regarded as a fair



end elevation



floor plan

FIGURE 3·2 QUEENSLAND D.A.I.A. HOUSE 1981 FROM WORKS DEPT (55)

representation of Queensland Government Aboriginal housing of recent years. The four bedroom house has been prepared with a commendable recognition for Aboriginal social structure.

The double sized fourth bedroom has been provided with an understanding that the people would use this for multiple purposes resulting from Aboriginal family perception. This room has been used for the accommodation of aunts and uncles, grandparents, cousins and foster parents as applicable (54) (55). This bedroom provision is a fair example of the extent to which D.A.I.A. housing takes Aboriginal social qualities into account.

Despite such positive design elements general problems have been identified in most government Aboriginal housing in remote Queensland.

Of principle concern to the D.A.I.A. has been the problem of maintenance. As mentioned above, this factor has been handled by the choice of less destructible materials for buildings (54) (55).

Maintenance problems may be seen to have resulted partly from excessive pressure applied to buildings by over-occupation as a result of the Aboriginal sharing maxim. Another contribution to poor maintenance performance in many cases may have been Aborigines' general lack of interest in cleaning and repair responsibilities in a house.

A further distinctive behaviour characteristic of Aborigines in many Queensland housing schemes has been Aborigines' lack of interest in using the planned dwelling spaces. A clear example of this has been noted where these people have chosen to gather in the shade of trees rather than in shaded spaces provided by breezeways or verandahs (55).

Such patterns suggest a degree of rejection of D.A.I.A. houses by Aboriginals, and are not sound testimony to the success of the approach to Aboriginal Housing in Queensland.

Housing designs have rarely taken cognizance of the social and cultural makeup of the particular Aboriginal groups. Standard houses of a suburban ideal have been provided across the whole state. This may be seen to be the least expensive approach, and has been justified with reference to official government policy. Certainly success has been achieved in particular circumstances.

In many cases, the distinctive feature of Aboriginal housing in the state has been the special inbuilt resistance to damage. This simple approach may be regarded as unsympathetic. Certainly, it is not in accordance with the ideal role of Aboriginal settlements as established in the previous section of this chapter.

It should be understood that the preceding discussion is far from comprehensive with regard to the success or otherwise of Queensland Government Aboriginal housing; nor has the full extent of involvement of the D.A.I.A. and the State Works Department been covered. In fact, the Works architects have designed houses for bodies other than the D.A.I.A. which may have some success with certain Aboriginal groups (55).

The preceding discussion has been abbreviated as Queensland Government Aboriginal housing is not seen to have special qualities of necessary value to this thesis.

This section has supported the idea that simplistic provision of European style housing for all Aborigines is not sound and leads to predictable problems. Explanation of this approach with reference to government policy may be valid, but does not morally justify inappropriate housing design.

3:04 LOOMA

INTRODUCTION

Looma is an Aboriginal village in the Kimberley region of West Australia. The Settlement housing, provided by the West Australian Housing Commission, was designed in 1973. Sites near Looma are of sacred importance to the Kimberley Aborigines, who gained rights to the land from a grazing station. Aborigines were squatting on location before housing was provided, and these people groups have remained in residence.

The region experiences very high temperatures with a moderate rainfall during summer. Prevailing summer breezes from the West and North-West have a cooling effect. Winter is warm and very dry with prevailing cold winds from the East. Vegetation is grassy open woodland.

Following erection of the Housing Commission's dwellings rapid increase in the local population occurred. The project was thus proclaimed as being successful by West Australian public servants. Looma houses are illustrated in figure 3.3.

This scheme was examined and reported on by Doctor M. Heppell in 1976. His report prepared for the Aboriginal Housing Panel (3) and a later paper (2) were very critical of many aspects of the Looma housing solution. While Doctor Heppell's research has not been presented in a very complete form, he has identified several technical as well as social deficiencies of the scheme.

HOUSING DIRECTION

This scheme was prepared by architects for the West Australian Housing Commission after 'a great deal of consultation' with the Looma people (2). Looma village was designed with intent to serve a transitional role. This role followed the policy lines of assimilation. As discussed in the previous section, this attitude is now considered by many as not

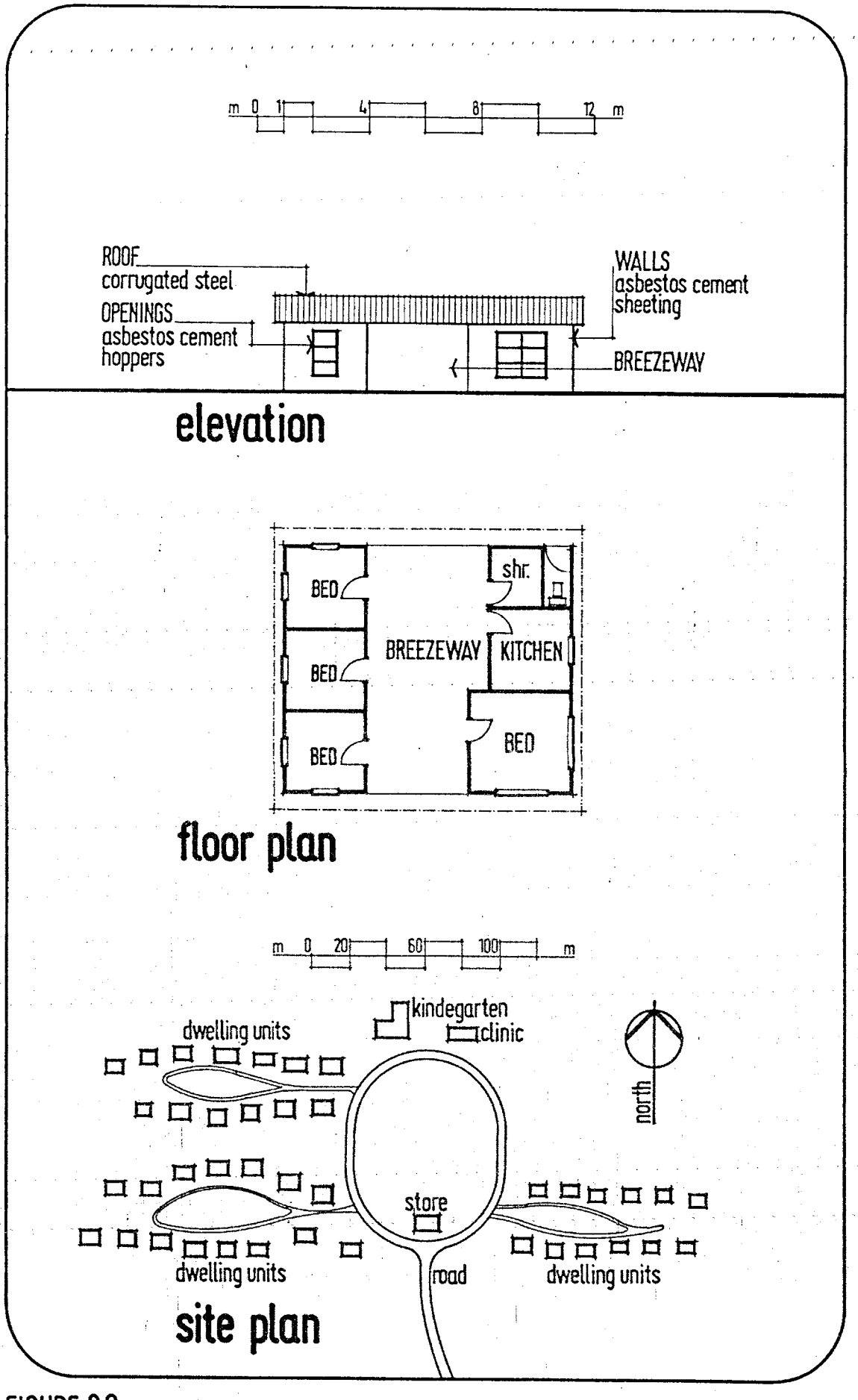


FIGURE 3·3 LOOMA VILLAGE HOUSING FROM HEPPELL (3)

being in the best interest of Aborigines. Looma Aborigines were expected to start at the bottom, and to work up to a European quality lifestyle.

Very basic shelters were provided for Looma Aborigines with the promise that these would be upgraded as the Aborigines performed in accordance with a correct Western manner.

The first houses provided at Looma were early stage dwellings of very low quality constructed of low maintenance materials. Doctor Heppell has quoted a Housing Commission spokesman defining the type of housing for Looma, who said,

> *We had to design something which was anti-savage, anti-ravage.* (2) p 38

In fairness to these architects, the Looma houses were designed after some research into Aboriginal attitudes to dwellings. Aboriginal peculiarities were taken into account for some design decisions. The solution was not equivalent to a European type house. Probably the most distinctive characteristic of these dwellings was their central breezeway. This was provided in recognition of Aborigines' established preference for external space. The breezeways did catch much of the cooling summer breezes mentioned earlier.

Another noticeable aspect of the Looma design was the location of the cooking stove. These were placed 6 metres from the house. It was claimed that Aborigines prefer to cook in the open. Another possibility is that the architects were more concerned about potential fire danger to dwellings.

Apart from the breezeway and cooker location, the Looma houses seemed to be based on entirely Western ideals of housing, albeit of a very low standard.

Generally, the design approach by architects for the Looma village seemed to take little cognizance of the real needs of the residents. Poor quality housing was provided with seemingly token gestures to Aboriginal requirements.

In examining the Looma village, Doctor Heppell criticized the euphemism of 'transitional housing'. He claimed that the dwellings provided were simply substandard houses with little consideration for even the practical aspects of human habitation (3). The architects of this scheme may be seen to have had a hard and unsympathetic approach to this scheme.

As mentioned earlier, low quality housing is not a viable or satisfactory practicable solution to Aboriginal housing. Non-urban Aborigines living in European dwellings are generally not automatically interested in learning a European lifestyle as a consequence. In most cases, the non-urban Aborigine has little desire in any way to become fully Westernized (7). Where dwellings are of an exceptionally poor standard, residents will have minimal incentive to perform in the house as a European. The standard of the house may depress any enthusiasm Aboriginal persons have, to follow the proposed transitional line to European housing.

Practical deficiencies of the Looma scheme included poor design for climatic moderation, poor choices of materials and poor planning. The steel houses were very hot during daytime, far hotter even than the high external temperatures. This was compounded by the fact that little ventilation was allowed for in these houses.

Finishes chosen included broom swept concrete floors, which required much effort to keep clean of dust and dirt which blew in.

Simple planning errors were made which most probably would have not been made for European clients. For example, the lavatory is only accessible from the outside of the building, in full view of neighbours. This was a poor planning decision.

Indeed privacy needs were seemingly ignored in the Looma scheme. The lavatory entrance was one example of this. Regarding privacy, Doctor Heppell has suggested that an in-

adequate number of bedrooms may have forced sharing, even where relationships were incompatible (3).

Heppell found that the Looma village residents suffered from overcrowding. He has written,

> *Most of the houses are grossly overcrowded which contributes to the noise, the stress, the absence of privacy ....* (3) p 32

Sharing of domiciles with relations has been regarded as a common trait among Aborigines.

The breezeways afforded poor privacy. Heppell has claimed that the decision to include breezeways in the Looma solution was a poor one. They were provided to serve as a central living area. He has described the breezeways as uncomfortable with regard to many factors including noise, wind, intruders, finish and privacy (2).

Much of the problem, Doctor Heppell saw as avoidable simply by the provision of a shutter at each end of the breezeway to control many of the above factors. The Looma houses have no verandah, which can be seen as a deficiency. Heppell claimed that verandahs have greater potential that the central breezeways as useful spaces (2)(3).

Behaviour patterns of the Looma people showed that these people had a very strong preference for external spaces.

Cooking was seen as a problem for residents of the Looma village. The distant location of cookers from the dwellings proved to be extremely impractical. After publication of Heppell's first report these were repositioned to the breezeway (2).

Doctor Heppell noted that a basic problem in the Looma project had been architectural consultation. He recognized that much of the problem arose as a result of the communication gap. These Aborigines had a peculiar venacular speech and manner. The designers were seen to have acted too hastily in assuming the design was at its optimum. Little opportunity was given to Aborigines to evaluate the scheme before it proceeded to completion.

The Looma housing village scheme had many shortcomings, several of these being merely of a practical nature. Inadequacies of the houses largely sprang from the Housing Commission's directive to supply dwellings of a transitional nature. These became merely houses of extremely low quality and cost.

3:05 LAVERTON

INTRODUCTION

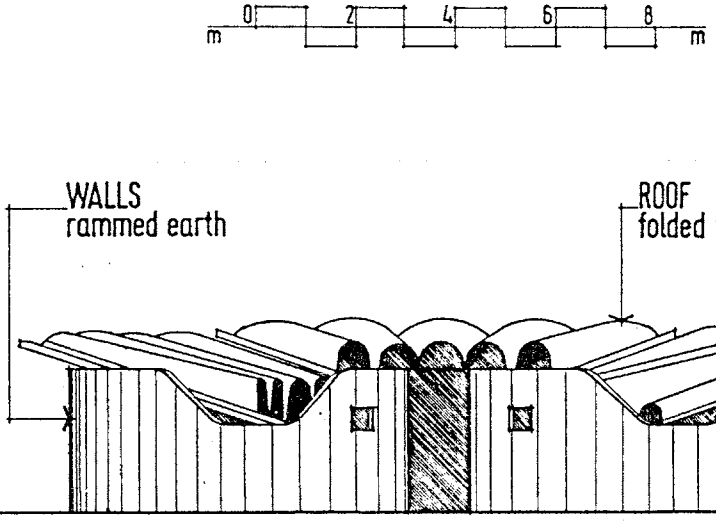
The Laverton house was designed in 1973 for Aboriginal clients in West Australia. Refer to figure 3.4. Laverton lies in a desert region of Australia with very high summer temperatures and low winter night temperatures. The average yearly rainfall of 200 mm. is small.

The Laverton design was administered by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, and was prepared in conjunction with the R.A.I.A. established Aboriginal Housing Panel. Consultant architect, Mr. L. Howroyd prepared a plan for a house after analysing the requirements of the particular client group. In this respect his approach may be described as being most commendable.

Howroyd's solution was considered radical. His design was based on his understanding of Aborigines' differing needs due to cultural and social factors. His aim to take a sympathetic approach agrees with the stated hypothesis of this thesis. Thus, it could be expected that Mr. Howroyd's design might have approached the ideal that this thesis advovates.

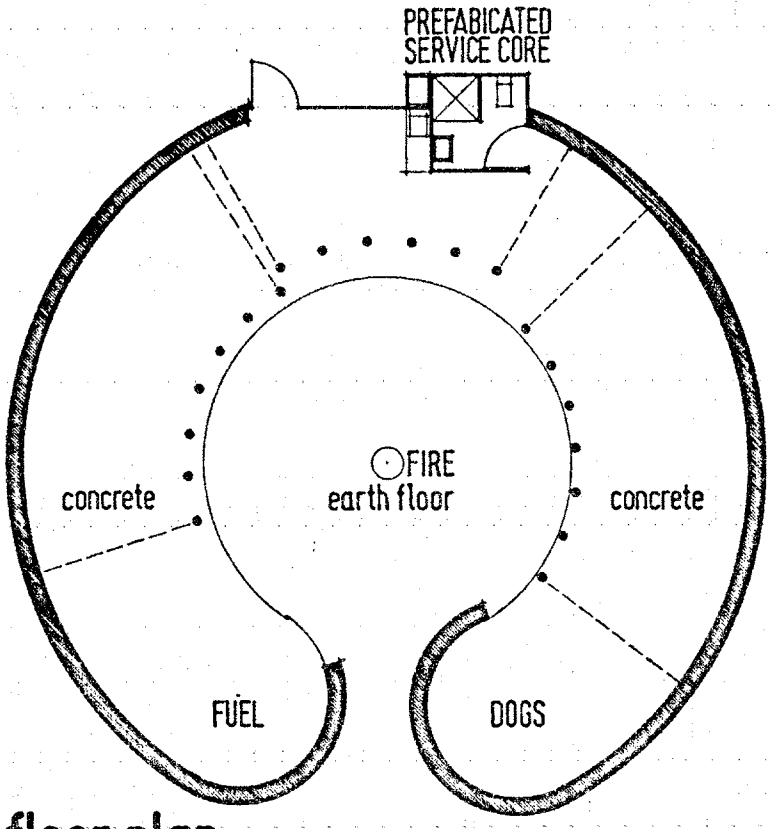
This scheme has been examined also by Doctor M. Heppell. His findings as documented in three publications form a basis for this discussion on the Laverton House (2)(6)(56).

According to Doctor Heppell, the Laverton solution by architect Howroyd was a failure. This view is substantiated by the fact that the programme was discontinued during early construction stages of only the second dwelling. The initial prototype dwelling had been abandoned.



elevation

orientation not specified
by the architect.



floor plan

FIGURE 3·4 THE LAVERTON HOUSE - L. HOWROYD · ARCHITECT FROM HEPPELL (2)

The architect attempted to provide a solution appropriate to the cultural needs of Aborigines - an approach endorsed in the hypothesis of this study. However the solution did not succeed. The definative reasons for failure of the Howroyd solution are central to the theme of this thesis.

HOUSING DIRECTION

Mr. L. Howroyd produced a document for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs as a submission for redevelopment of Laverton in West Australia. The information presented was derived from his research into the particular housing requirements of the Aborigines in Laverton. The Department, as the funding authority accepted the soundness of Howroyd's research and consequently accepted his solution forthwith.

Mr. Howroyd had examined the cultural, social and physical requirements of the Laverton people and used his findings as a basis for his design. He recognized that the typically suburban ideal of housing nuclear families, was inappropriate to these Aborigines. Mr. D. Lipscome, a journalist, praised the non rectangular form of the building as being proof of the scheme's sympathy for Aborigines differing requirements (56). This view may be dismissed as being simplistic and uninformed.

He also noted that Aborigine's affinity with fire. He saw that fire has both spiritual and practical importance, and so a place was given for fires. Affinity with the land and with the heavens was also seen as being of prime importance by Mr. Howroyd. A most significant characteristic of the Laverton design was the open roof, provided to allow occupants to observe the skies.

Protection from the elements is an obvious need of all people and Mr. Howroyd accepted the same need among these Aborigines in his report.

Flexibility of living arrangements is integral to many Aborigines. Howroyd recognized this in his evidence.

The house was designed to allow for an extended family to

live in a flexible manner. Internal walls were to be of any material such as hessian or galvanised iron placed and moved to the occupants' preferred locations. These partitions would not however obstruct the view to the central fire. The mud floor was provided as recognition of Aborigines' identification with the land.

Evidently, the Laverton house design was based on a broad understanding of aspects of Aboriginal culture.

REVIEW

Doctor M. Heppell in strong terms critized the design of Laverton House. He has written,

> *It was a design which bore no relationship to what was wanted so that, before it was even completed Local Aborigines regarded it as a source of embarrassment, it was founded on a number of questionable assumptions about the organization of traditional Aboriginal camps, and it failed to provide the required shelter.* (2) p 34

Doctor Heppell has claimed that the Laverton house was approved by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs on the basis of Mr. Howroyd's evidence despite protestations from Laverton Aborigines. He has cited claims from these people that the design was seen as contrary to their needs even during the design preparation stage (6). A letter, forwarded to Howroyd and the D.A.A., was written by the Laverton Aborigines which clearly stated this complaint (6).

The design approach of the architect may be regarded as being based on knowledge and sympathy. Heppell has disagreed. He has written,

> *The Laverton house was designed according to a misplaced notion on the part of the architect, of some aspects of traditional Aboriginal social organization and an apparent ignorance of the perceptual demands of traditional Aborigines.* (56) p 70

Mr. P. Hamilton, an architect and a respected authority on Aboriginal housing has commented on Heppell's criticism of the architect. He has suggested that the key problem in this project was more than simply poor architectural consultation. Rather, the time lapse between consultation and construction may be regarded as the cause of major problems (45).

Heppell has been harsh in his criticism of the Laverton house on both socio-technical grounds and on technical points. Socio-cultural aspects include family and domiciliary structure as well as environmental perception. Technical aspects are the elements of environment protection of the house.

The house was at no stage occupied by an extended family as was planned for, or even by a smaller family. The reason for this has not been clarified. An elderly pensioner couple assumed residence in the dwelling, but abandoned it after about two months. It then remained empty.

Traditional Aboriginal camp layout was generally based on a flexible structure. Families camped in a proximity related to changing kinship ties. It is not a simple matter to cater for this in housing design, and the Laverton house restricts this aspect of traditional existence. The surrounding solid wall prevents many desired proximities from being observed.

Another significant result of the high enclosing walls, concerns Aborigines' need to observe. These people need to observe the landscape and also other people. Important also is the traditional etiquette of approach. The Laverton house totally prevented the occupant from observing his surroundings. Visitors also could not effect the correct manner of approach where the resident is hidden behind such restrictive walls.

Hamilton has concurred with Heppell on the points of proximity relationships and observation (57).

On the point of environmental observation, Doctor Heppell claimed that for many Aborigines of Laverton, ability to

scan the horizon is more important than ability to observe the sky. The Laverton house allows some observation of the sky but enclosing walls prevent virtually all view of the landscape (2). The severe enclosure of the solid walls is a major deficiency of the Howroyd design. It does show poor understanding of Aboriginal perceptions. Hamilton has agreed with this criticism also (57).

Another major objection by Doctor Heppell to the design of the Laverton house concerns security. He has claimed that the building had poor security and was often the subject of abuse from outsiders. Contents of the refrigerator were often stolen. When the gates of the compound were locked, frustrated outsiders would sometimes throw rocks into the building (2). Mr. Howroyd would have noted that in traditional circumstances, security was not a consideration. He would have translated this to mean that the new solution need not offer great security.

Environmental conditions were criticized as the poorest aspect of the Laverton solution. Principally, rain fell within the building, as the roof was open. Rainwater from the roof flowed to the dwelling's floor, drenching the occupants and all of their possessions (as no storage was provided). The low rainfall at Laverton, mentioned earlier, effectively reduces the significance of this disadvantage. Wind blew any rain directly onto the residents in most parts of the house. Maintenance of a fire in the planned location was impossible during rain.

The roof design had proved to be poor for shade provision as well as with respect to wind rain. Shade from the roof was inadequate due to the central opening and the gap between the wall and roof.

These problems regarding environmental conditions are purely practical. They are unrelated to specifically Aboriginal considerations, and serve to illustrate an important point. It appears very possible to lose sight of practical considerations when design thought is devoted to the relatively romantic considerations of cultural appropriateness.

Environmental comfort needs to differ between non-urban Aborigines and Europeans, but not to the degree demanded by the Laverton house. With great effort devoted to design for social fit, Mr. Howroyd seemingly lost sight of some practical aspects of shelter. This design deficiency should be avoidable.

The second problem mentioned above concerning misinterpretation of Aboriginal needs should also be avoidable. Mr. Howroyd attempted to analyse symbolic aspects of Aboriginal culture and to apply them to housing. The product has been criticized for over-romanticism (47). This has been exemplified by his decision to paint an Aboriginal representation of a goanna lizard on the outside wall of the building. This figure embarrassed the Laverton people as the goanna was a very private symbol.

This is a clear example of typically poor translation of Aboriginal culture to Aboriginal needs by Europeans. Mr. Howroyd's failure in this respect is understandable, as Aboriginal culture and values are very complex. White consultants have long had difficulty in coping with this complexity.

Mr. Howroyd's attempt to express Aboriginal culture in built form can be seen as an intrusion. The Aboriginal clients would be right in questioning the white architect's right and competence to interpret and restate Aboriginal values in his own terms.

Expression of an architect's view of Aboriginal culture in a creative built form may lead to unexpected side effects. The unpredictable effects of the goanna painting was one example of this. Another was the multitude of problems associated with both the solid wall and the open roof.

A design approach along more technical lines may have had greater chance of success. A solution starting with the necessary environmental moderation, and then offering the flexibility and outlook required by the particular Aborigines would have been more likely to succeed.

Doctor Heppell's criticisms of Mr. Howroyd's design indiv-

idually, generally seem very fair. On one aspect he seems rather inconsistant, however. Elsewhere in his writings, Heppell calls for a more radical approach to Aboriginal housing design from government (3).

Laverton surely, as a radical solution has offered valuable insights into housing design for Aborigines. Concrete experimentation may be regarded as being of equal value to academic debate.

Architect, P. Hamilton has said that the important factor in the Laverton house has been the process. The establishment of an initial brief, and post-construction performance evaluation have provided valuable source data (45).

Mr. Howroyd's house at Laverton with Doctor Heppell's writings on the project together provide a valuable base for further experimentation and research.

3:06 JIGALONG AND YATALA

INTRODUCTION

Jigalong and Yatala are two remote Aboriginal communities which have retained much of their traditional culture and lifestyle. Each of these settlements has been examined by anthropologists. Jigalong has been studied by Doctor Robert Tonkinson of the Australian National University with Doctor Myrna Tonkinson of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (52)(58). Their findings form the basis for the following discussion on this community. Isabel M. White of the Monash University has examined the Yatala community (59).

Both settlements have maintained a strong Aboriginal identity and have not been drawn towards a European style existence. Jigalong, a desert community, is located in the North West of West Australia. Yatala is an Aboriginal reserve in the Western desert region of South Australia.

At the time of the respective investigations the population of each settlement was over 300 people. People of both com-

munities were mainly living in the open or in traditional shelters of natural materials and canvas. Therefore, research into Jigalong and Yatala present no findings on Aboriginal behaviour in formal housing. This section reviews conclusions on housing considerations for these traditional orientated Aborigines. A brief outline description of the lifestyle of each group will be presented prior to discussion on housing.

JIGALONG

Lifestyle

Jigalong was originally a Christian mission, but the West Australian government assumed administration of the community in the early 1970s. The Christian staff, being authoritarian and paternalistic were disliked by the Jigalong Aborigines (52).

These people have held to a strong 'tradition-orientated' outlook since white contact these years (52). Attempts to convert these people to a Christian and Western lifestyle were resisted and resented in almost all cases. The Jigalong Aborigines have retained a strong bond with their homeland territory, and still lead a lifestyle along traditional lines. They are dependant on the government for health services, some food and some equipment provisions, like most Aboriginal groups of remote areas.

The Jigalong Aborigines often move camp. The Tonkinsons have noted that they move camp for economic, social and religious reasons.

Housing Direction

Doctor R. Tonkinson and Doctor M. Tonkinson identified a need for improved housing for the Jigalong Aborigines. At the date of their research, this had not been provided as had been promised by the government. The Tonkinsons' reports clarify potential problem areas in housing the Jig-

along Aborigines. Their proposals should have wider implications for housing of all non-urban Aborigines (52) (58).

The Tonkinsons' call for housing was based on their assumption that improved housing would lead to an improved quality of life. They have suggested that it would help to lift the level of health and hygiene, which were seen to be poor at Jigalong. In addition, it would provide more comfortable living conditions in the harsh desert environment of Jigalong (52) (58).

This group of Aborigines had showed considerable environmental and social adaptability. However, it was suggested that inappropriate housing would demand changes of too great a magnitude. This could be at the expense of racial pride and identity. The Tonkinsons have called for,

> *needed improvements in living conditions without seriously disrupting what Aborigines perceive as positive aspects of their present lifestyle ....*
>
> (58) p 198

This disruption was not predicted to be of drastic proportions. The Tonkinson report has claimed that Aborigines would not behave as Europeans simply as a result of residence in a European style house. Most likely, the Aborigines would adjust the alien environment to suit themselves. Their long established values and perceptions would survive any external pressure, such as change to a European house (58).

The Tonkinsons have called for housing design appropriate to the social character of the Jigalong Aborigines. Considerations for social comfort of the Jigalong Aborigines were thought to include social groupings and domiciliary flexibility. These elements were seen as vital elements of any proposed housing solution (52) (58).

Flexibility referred to any internal domiciliary divisions as well as to siting of dwellings as a whole unit. Mobility has been identified as a most necessary characteristic of dwellings for these traditionally based people.

Apprehension about the implications involved in housing provided by European Australians were foreseen by the Tonkinsons. Primarily, potential problems were seen to stem from white specialists, including architects, and difficulties with communication and consultation. These people were said to lack the cross-cultural perspectives needed to provide sympathetic housing (58).

Provision of white style housing would not destroy traditional Law. However, the Tonkinsons established that such a move would most likely lead to detrimental consequences. A more sympathetic and gradual change would have greater chance of success.

YATALA

Lifestyle

Yatala is an Aboriginal community of a peculiar character. The whole group moves camp several times a year to a different area of the Yatala reserve. An administration centre provides services for the Aborigines who camp along any of the many tracks which radiate from the mission. The mission staff assists the moves with vehicles.

The traditional based lifestyle of the Yatala Aborigines is not free from Western influences. European artifacts are a part of the travelling camps including canvas tarpaulins, mobile water tanks and a medical caravan. The mission centre includes a store from which Western foods and equipment are obtained.

I. M. White has discussed several qualities of the Yatala Aborigines' social organization. Particularly, she has established that these Aborigines regard all others of the community as kin, among which there exists certain divisions. Individual and group domiciliary locations are dependant upon the kin relationships (59).

Relocation of dwellings depends on several factors, including economic, social and religious considerations.

The work of I.M. White on the Yatala Aborigines has extended to consideration of the potential impact of fixed dwellings upon their social fabric. She has noted that any change to fixed houses may be traumatic for the Yatala people. I.M. White has written,

> *If a village with permanent houses were to replace the movable camp ... The Yatala people would face some difficult adjustments.* (59) p 104

Most Yatala Aborigines were seen to have no desire to live in houses. I.M. White identified two principal reasons for this rejection of European houses. One factor, prevalent among women, was the understanding of new responsibilities of maintenance of houses. These people were repelled by the demand for constant cleaning of dwellings. I.M. White has seen this as,

> *a rejection of white values, particularly those centred around the ownership and careful maintenance of property.* (59) p 104

The second major identified deficiency of white style housing for Yatala Aborigines was inflexibility. The traditional shelters of this group were often altered in size, shape and location. White has claimed that as these alterations are impossible with permanent dwellings, this would cause problems (59).

I.M. White has also briefly referred to communication difficulties between architects and Aborigines, but has not expanded on this note (59).

REVIEW

Studies of the Jigalong and Yatala communities have concluded that a single step change from traditional camps to permanent European dwellings would be most inappropriate for these people. Transition stress would result from the changed circumstances.

No suggestion has been made that European housing would destroy the traditional life patterns which remain strong today. However, Aborigines would experience a certain strain with a change to Western dwellings, arising from several factors.

Both authors have also referred to poor communication experiences between architects and Aborigines.

The findings of research into Jigalong and Yatala contribute to an understanding of housing for non-urban Aborigines generally.

3:07 DESERT SETTLEMENT TRENDS

INTRODUCTION

Some Aborigines of Australian deserts lead a lifestyle closely related to pre-European practices. Aborigines have chosen deliberately to lead a traditional way of life, or to avoid Western influences. An increasing number of Aborigines have consciously chosen to leave European based settlements and have returned to a more traditional existence.

This trend has been defined as the 'outstation movement'. Such settlements are referred to as 'desert homeland centres'. These movements are by definition, most prevalent in the central desert regions of Australia.

Several authors have written on these homeland communities including D. Biernoff (23), M. Heppell and J.J. Wigley (60), N.M. Wallace (61), and W.J. Gray (62). These studies provide valuable insights into housing and shelter considerations for non-urban Aborigines.

R.M. Berndt has said that,

> *No assessment has yet been made of the actual number of Aborigines who may be regarded as being traditionally orientated.* (63) p 5

Their significance however, has been noted by the above authors and by P. Hamilton (45).

DESERT HOMELAND CENTRES

The desert homeland centres fulfil an important role. They provide opportunity for Aborigines to live a near traditional existence on land which may be sacred to that particular group. These outstation communities have clearly shown a preference for traditional Aboriginal customs. Within larger government and church settlements, traditional Aboriginal culture has usually been severely hampered.

Aborigines have chosen to move away from the established population centres which are administered by either governments or churches (62). This movement has been observed by all authors named above, although none claim that the trend is necessarily permanent.

The reasons for movement to outstations are varied. Quite obviously, the basic aim of Aborigines involved in this movement is to lead a lifestyle in greater touch with pre-European concepts, especially spiritual affinity with the land.

N.M. Wallace funded by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, identified motivation for this decentralization as a deeply based response to spiritual and psychological needs, and also as a return to dignity and independence (61). Gray agreed with the latter point (62).

W.J. Gray of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, saw the motivation based primarily on Aborigines' identification with the environment (62). He noted that many Aborigines on formal settlements recognized the threat of white capitalistic exploitation to their sacred lands. Outstation movements were seen partially as a response to halt this damage.

Gray also concluded that Aborigines were moving away from established settlements to avoid non-Aboriginal authority (62). Heppell and Wigley noted the same force (60).

The pressure of living in a formal cross-cultural institution was unacceptable to many Aborigines. A desire to escape from the stresses associated with large permanent conglomer-

ations of people was seen as a driving force in creation of desert homeland centres by Heppell and Wigley (56). Architect, P. Hamilton has also recognized this as an important reason for the homeland trends.

The outstation movement is a rejection of white culture generally. It may be inferred that this rejection encompasses all major elements of the cultural gap, especially environmental perception and materialism. Aboriginal patterns of social organization are often poorly suited to white society. Homeland trends encourage Aborigines to allow traditional shelter solutions to relate to kinship patterns.

It would be convenient to assume that the outstation movement is the simple answer to the Aboriginal 'problem' in total. Aborigines living an existence based on their own culture, out of sight of whites may appear to be a near perfect solution. Heppell and Wigley have pointed out several areas of imperfection which require serious consideration, however.

The broad reasons for the outstation movement outlined above cover the major forces involved, although in broad and simplified terms.

The outstation movement, as with almost any aspect of Aboriginal Affairs, is filled with complexity. The attitude that *'sending all the blacks back to the bush to make them happy'* is the answer can be seen as a gross generalization based on ignorance. Hamilton has agreed with this point (45).

The complexity in consideration of the decentralization trend derives from two factors:-

i wide diversity of individual reasons for decentralization

ii wide diversity of individual Aborigines' culture identification and acculturization

The second factor listed above concerning culture identification is most important. As noted in the early chapters of this thesis, almost all Aborigines partly identify with Western culture and partly with Aboriginal culture (8).

The proportional make-up of these is very inconsistent between groups, between individual Aborigines, and even within one individual over time.

Obviously, only Aborigines with traditional Aboriginal sympathies will be motivated to follow the outstation movement. That many Aborigines do so is proof that tradional Aboriginal culture is alive today in some regions, and is likely to survive. Hamilton has suggested that the homeland trend (and with it, Aboriginal culture) is likely to 'thrive and expand' (45).

It should be noted that even Aborigines who do choose to live on desert outstations usually also choose to make use of several aspects of white culture. These included such utilitarian items as flour, matches, rifles, canvas, cars and radios, as well as health services and the like.

The desert homeland centres, while not offering the perfect settlement solution for all Aborigines do offer an alternative to an institutionalized existence. This choice allows many remote area Aborigines to follow a lifestyle closer to their personal ideal, leading to a greater self respect.

Housing Direction

Housing and shelter requirements of Aborigines of the desert homeland centres are necessarily varied. Different communities have different housing needs even within the confines of this single category of Aboriginal settlements.

As mentioned above, the outstation movement is filled with complexity. Generalization of Aboriginal housing needs even within this narrow field is not valid. It may be assumed however, that formal Western housing is not appropriate for most of these groups. Alternative housing and shelter solutions are generally needed.

The Aboriginal Housing Panel, established by the R.A.I.A. and funded by the D.A.A. in 1972, formed a Desert Housing Task Force to examine, test and report on alternative hous-

ing designs for desert Aborigines. The task force was to be a multidisciplinary team which was to conduct extensive research with Aboriginals to determine a set of appropriate designs, and to form a list of design criteria. This task force reviewed many designs and arrived at four solutions which were seen to be most suitable.

Doctor M. Heppell has published a critical review of the Desert Housing Project. His comments on the project may have been over severe in negative terms, but his observations have offered a secondary view of the task force findings (56).

Other writings have given evidence of the positive attitude and hopes of the early days of the Desert Housing Task Force (64).

The Task Force initially established a list of design criteria for Aboriginal housing. Heppell has criticized this list for its non-differentiation. He has suggested that design guidelines should note that degree of importance and the degree of variability of criteria which these did not (56).

Solutions recommended by the panel included the Laverton house which were examined in detail earlier. The following solutions were also proposed:-

i the James Wiltja
ii the 3B Wiltja
iii the Apultula spaceframe house

Refer to figure 3.5.

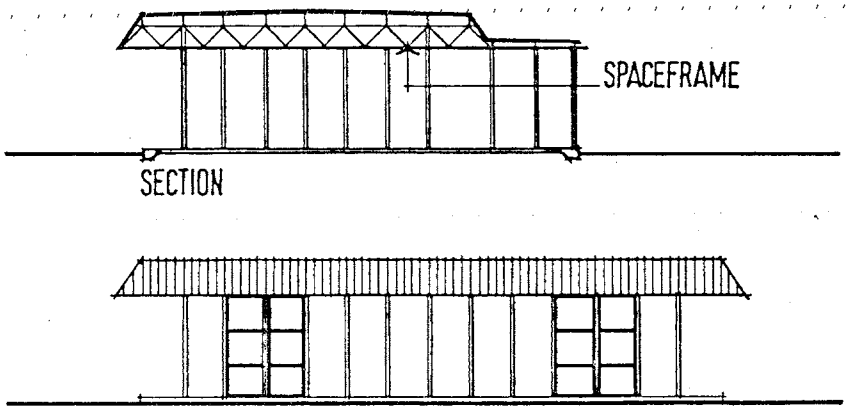
The James Wiltja

The James wiltja was described as a

durable form of the traditional wiltja

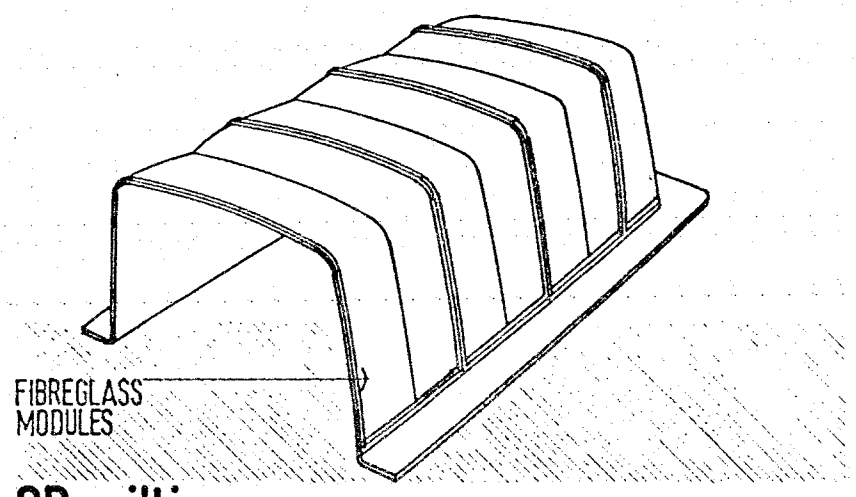
(64) p 65

This was a canvas shelter on a steel pipe frame, of a size 2400 mm. x 1800 mm. x 1400 mm. high. It was designed as a low cost relocatable shelter, and was probably the most successful of the task force's proposals. The Tonkinsons



apatula spaceframe house

m 0 2 m



3B wiltja

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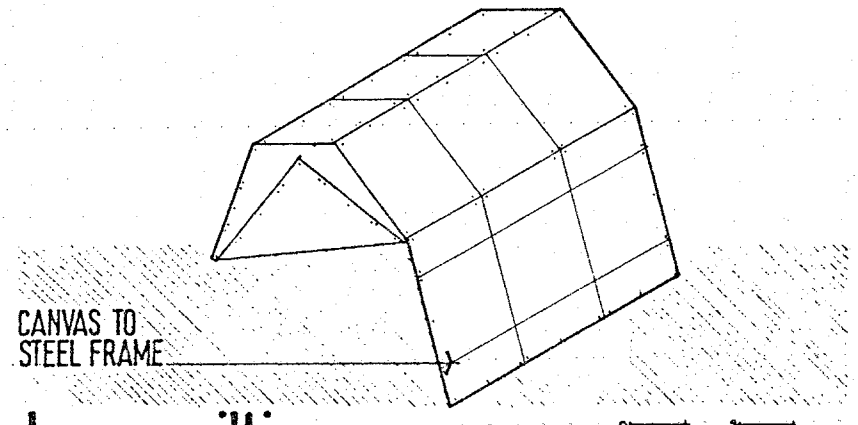


James wiltja

m 0 1 m

FIGURE 3·5 DESERT HOUSING SOLUTIONS FROM HEPPELL (56)

have referred to the potential suitability of this type of shelter for the Jigalong Aborigines. In addition Doctor Heppell has noted that the James wiltja had initial success at Yuendumm settlement (56).

Heppell has however, found certain qualities of this shelter to be less than satisfactory. His major criticism of the James wiltja was that its size was inadequate for an Aboriginal family size group, and that it was difficult to extend upon. The small size of the dwelling has one advantage in that it may be moved as a whole unit by a few people.

Heppell has criticized the James wiltja on certain technical points. It was regarded as too drafty in windy conditions and too hot in the sun (64).

The James wiltja has been regarded as quite a successful housing solution for some remote area Aborigines. However, even with this design, Aborigines preferred to conduct most of their daytime activity well away from their dwellings.

The 3B Wiltja

The 3B wiltja was designed by a firm of industrial designers in Sydney. This shelter consisted of interlocking fibreglass shells. It could be regarded as a competent design in terms of Western aesthetic standards.

The Sydney designers had had no contact with Aboriginal people, and the resultant design solution had little suitability for the clients. The 3B wiltja underwent several changes in design but was never regarded as successful in any terms (56) (64).

The Aputula Spaceframe House

The Aputula spaceframe house was produced by a building firm as a panelized industrial building system, and was chosen by The Desert Task Force as a suitable solution for housing of some Aborigines.

This system comprised steel roofing to a spaceframe which

was supported on steel columns. Asbestos cement lined infill panels could be fixed in a variety of floor plan patterns. The main advantage of the system was seen to be the ability to cope with Aboriginal family patterns (64).

These dwellings were built for Aborigines at one settlement and proved to be initially popular with the clients. Doctor Heppell has found that the Aputula house soon lost favour as the novelty wore off (56).

He has also found that the house had inherent problems. Firstly, it was expensive. Its cost actually compared poorly with other building systems. Cost has been seen as the major disadvantage of the Aputula spaceframe house (56).

A second problem has been seen as the difficulty of erection and modification. The system has a technical complexity not suited to many non-urban Aboriginal groups (56).

Doctor Heppell has found that this house performed poorly from an environmental control point of view. The house was not watertight or windtight. It was hot in summer and cold in winter (56).

Despite the identified disadvantages, the Aputula house may have been an appropriate solution for some non-urban Aboriginal groups. However, it has not been considered to have a wide suitability.

REVIEW

A significant trend among Aborigines exists in remote or desert areas of Australia towards a more traditionally based existence. This trend has been seen as a positive reaction against most elements of Western culture, a major one being housing. Housing and shelter requirements are varied, even within this very confined section of the Aboriginal population. Limited success has been attained by architectural involvement in this area, and some failure points have been noted.

3:08 CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER

Chapter Three initially established that the role of Aboriginal settlements should be to provide housing appropriate to the clients' cultural identity. This was followed by examination of the performance of a wide variety of non-urban Aboriginal housing. In most cases, housing schemes have been far less than satisfactory, considering the ideal role of Aboriginal settlements.

This general failure has been shown to stem from two sources. Firstly, poor architectural consultation processes have prevented designs from even starting on sound principles. Secondly, housing designs have been founded either on white ideals, or on whites' misinterpretation of Aboriginal needs. Both of these approaches may be regarded as a non-sympathetic involvement which has led to housing solutions which are socially uncomfortable for Aborigines.

Chapter Three has taken a broad view of recent Aboriginal housing and settlement design policies. Practical aspects of Aboriginal housing have been studied. These findings and those of the next chapter will be compared to earlier theoretical findings in the conclusion of this thesis.

This chapter has related specifically to two elements of the hypothesis on a practical level. Firstly, the significance of the element of stress for Aborigines in modern housing situations has been established. Secondly, the need for a more sympathetic architectural involvement has been noted in most of this chapter's case studies.

CHAPTER FOUR

We, the foreigners,
In this our own land,
Know not
Where lies our future track.
No place forward,
None back.

Kath Walker (1)

THE MORNINGTON ISLAND SETTLEMENT

4.01 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER

This chapter examines a case of contemporary Aboriginal housing in some detail. A case study will test the findings of the first three chapters. These will be supported or will be refuted. The minor case studies of Chapter Three with this study will lead to a conclusion in the final chapter with regard to the hypothesis of this thesis.

LARDIL OF MORNINGTON ISLAND

The Lardil are a tribe of Aborigines who have inhabited Mornington Island for centuries. Mornington Island, located in the Gulf of Carpentaria in Northern Queensland, is about 65 km. x 25 km. wide, and is near to 100 000 hectares in area. Refer to figure 4.1.

The island has a bountiful food supply, but inhabitants have been subjected to extremes of climate, to which they have adapted with various forms of traditional shelter.

This chapter will examine a full background of housing for the Lardil tribe. As explained in Chapter One, both cultural factors and environmental factors are critical in housing design, and for this reason both will be initially examined.

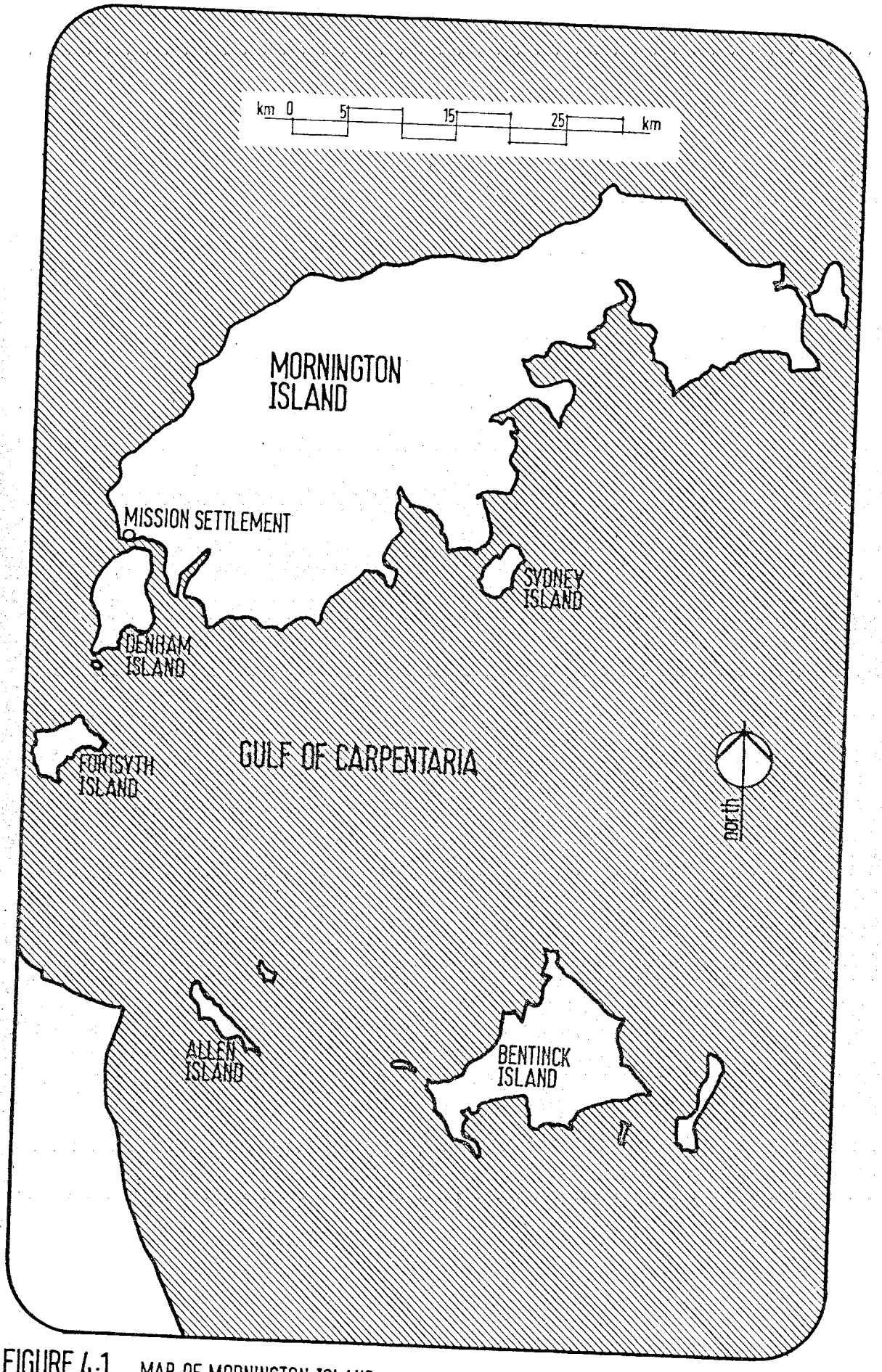


FIGURE 4-1 MAP OF MORNINGTON ISLAND

FROM MEMMOTT (66)

Following this, a discussion on traditional Lardil settlements will be linked by an outline of cultural change to a final examination of the contemporary Mornington Island settlement.

The Lardil tribe has been the subject of comprehensive research by Doctor Paul Memmott, an architect of the University of Queensland. He is also director of the Aboriginal Data Archives located at that University. His extensive research into the Lardil history, lifestyle and culture has been used as the major basis for preparation of this chapter. Memmott's major thesis on the Lardil tribe was completed in 1975. Where this chapter refers to contemporary circumstances, 1975 is the reference date (66).

4:02 THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION

This section looks at the natural environment of Mornington Island. Environmental factors are of course a most important consideration, being a major determinant of the design of both traditional and contemporary housing of the Lardil people.

CLIMATE

Mornington Island is located in the tropics. The climate of the island varies greatly throughout the year. The year consists of a long dry season and a short wet season with transitional seasons between. It can be divided into five seasons.

i.	cool dry	May-August
ii.	warm dusty	September-October
iii.	hot dry - wet transition	November-December
iv.	wet	December-March
v.	hot wet - dry transition	April

The local climate during each of these periods shall be discussed with a view to understanding the environmental requirements of housing on Mornington Island.

Cool Dry

The most significant aspect of this period is the regular South-Easterly winds. These trade winds blow strongest in June and July. They start in the very early morning from the West and work around to the South-East, reaching a peak before noon of about 20 km/h. They then blow through the afternoon until about 7 to 8 pm. At this hour winds usually drop to a light breeze or calm and then build up towards midnight. The average maximum daily temperature of this period is approximately 27°C. July and August are amongst the driest months of the year.

Warm Dusty

Temperatures rise during this period until October with an average daily maximum of approximately 31°C. Warmer winds come mainly from the North and North-West. Most of the surface water remaining disappears and much of the ground cover dies. Uncomfortable dust storms result. September and October are amongst the driest months of the year.

Hot Wet Transition

During this period the atmosphere becomes exhaustingly humid. The maximum temperatures which are reached in November, accompany this humidity. Average daily maximums in November and December are approximately 32°C.

Wet Season

The North-Westerly monsoons are the most significant aspect of this season. The prevailing winds of the season are from the North East. By January, the wet season is fully set in, with a series of wet periods of a few days duration.

Calms between these falls are hot and humid with an average maximum daily temperature of approximately 32°C. Temperatures are slightly lower than in November, but humidity reaches a maximum in January and February. These are the wettest months of the year. The water streams commence their annual flow, with the freshwater springs forming along the coastline. Insects are prolific.

Any cyclones occur during this period. They have averaged one every two years over the last 60 years, with consequent damage to flora and fauna. Tornadoes have also occurred.

Hot Wet - Dry Transition

The incidence of monsoons lessens in late March. A hot period of calms and variable breezes then occurs. Both temperature and humidity decrease during this time. Thunderstorms become less frequent. Temperatures still regularly reach the 30°C level.

It can be seen that the climate of Mornington Island is, in some respects, extreme. Inhabitants experience very high temperatures and extremely high humidity. Wind Behaviour is certainly a major consideration in construction of any structures on the island. This demands consideration in two respects - use of breezes for cooling, and protection of inhabitants from very high winds.

VEGETATION

Vegetation on Mornington Island varies considerably across the island. Distinct vegetation characters exist on the coast and on the plateau. Vegetation on each of these areas shall be covered briefly here with a view to understanding availability of local building materials.

The Coastal Areas

The coast consists of sandy beaches with sand dunes. Behind the dunes are damp spots which in some cases are mangroves

or swamps. Pandanus plants grow in these wet areas as well as Melaluca shrubs. Casuarina trees often grow near the beaches with tussock grass covering dunes.

The Plateau

The plateau has a varied vegetation. The following types of trees grow in the forests, woodlands and grasslands of the plateau areas of Mornington Island.

i. Eucalypt - boxwood and white gum
ii. Grevillea - silky oak
iii. Melaleuca - of various species
iv. Acacia - of various species

Grasses of the plateau are varied including areas of tussock grassland. The drier areas of the plateau have spinifex grasses, which may grow with Melaleuca and Acacia shrubs of up to 1 metre high.

Some wooded areas of the plateau have Acacias growing as tall as 10 m. high or Eucalypts reaching 12 m. high.

REVIEW

The natural environment of Mornington Island made the life-style of the Lardil tribe different in some respects from mainland tribes. Lesser emphasis was placed on food gathering, as food was so plentiful. The changing climate of Mornington Island demanded certain types of shelter. The island's vegetation provided the necessary timbers and grasses for shelters to withstand the extremes of climate.

4:03 SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

INTRODUCTION

The Lardil tribe, unlike most mainland tribes had a very precise boundary to their territory. The coastline of Mornington Island defined their area exactly. The resources of Mornington Island provided adequately for the needs of the

Lardil people. Very little trade occurred with external tribes. This differed from most mainland tribes who interacted with up to ten external groups.

Doctor Memmott has estimated that at the time of European contact, 200 to 400 people lived on Mornington Island, (66) comprising the total of the Lardil tribe. The Lardil people shared a common distinctive language and culture, as well as common territory - satisfying the definition of 'tribe' given in Chapter One.

KINSHIP STRUCTURE

The Lardil tribe consisted of two parts, or moieties. Each of these was divided into two semi-moieties, which were each further divided into two sub-sections. Thus the Lardil tribe consisted of eight sub-sections.

The semi-moiety was a group with one patrilineal line of decent. At birth the individual would assume the opposite sub-section to his father, but within the same semi-moiety.

This social structure directed everyday behaviour. Everybody in the tribe was seen as a relative defined by sub-section and generation level. Kinship definition and marriage rules related to the moiety structure. For example, a man could only choose a wife from within one prescribed sub-section. Moieties determined the kinship relationships between Lardil Aborigines, but did not necessarily relate to their territorial structure.

TERRITORIAL STRUCTURE

The system above refers to the Lardil social structure. Another separate system defined the landholding structure. Mornington Island was seen as being divided into 'countries'. Each kinship group had common interest in their country with respect to hunting and gathering. This concept of country aligns with W.E.H. Stanner's definition of domain in Chapter One.

Doctor Memmott referred to the country's kinship group as patriclan. He defined patriclan as a number of families of patrilineal affiliation having common identity with a fixed territory (66). A patriclan consisted of related males, and females who married into the group.

This setup was not quite as straightforward as suggested above. Groups varied in size and structure as individuals and small groups travelled extensively for social and economic reasons. Thus, the territorial structure of the Lardil tribe was not fixed, but changed constantly with time for many reasons.

Each patriclan was usually headed by a senior male. The group's country was named after this man. Leaders were chosen on patrilineal lines to mature males or by bequest Conflict on this point could have resulted in the division of a country into two.

The practice of appointing a presiding figure for an Aboriginal group appears to be in conflict with the findings of Chapter One. However, the role of the leader was certainly not that of chief or absolute ruler.

In fact, he had rather limited power and responsibility. He saw that the group's food gathering and other activity did not harm the environment. The 'boss' had certain religious responsibilities also. The Lardil Aborigines believed that the boss belonged to the land - certainly not vice-versa.

The country boundaries are not fixed in all directions. They run at approximate right angles to the coast. Doctor Memmott found that no clear boundary existed on the inland side of each country; the interior of the island being considered as common free hunting land.

FURTHER SOCIAL DIVISIONS

Doctor Memmott has identified a further system of social division, peculiar to the Aborigines of Mornington Island (64). The Lardil people referred to each other with the terms of 'leeward' and windward'. These terms relate dir-

ectly to the island geography and the prevailing South-Easterly wind direction. Doctor Memmott has identified four distinct groups in this system.

i. South-East - windward
ii. North-West - leeward
iii. Eastern Peninsular and Wallaby Island
iv. South West

Memmott has found that the first three of these groups still exist today. There was considerable rivalry between these groups, creating disharmony at times as well as healthy competition (66).

FAMILY

The family structure of the Lardil tribe is in accordance with the findings of Chapter One. A man and his wife or wives slept with their own children. Refer to figure 4.2. Polygamy was well accepted. Widowed grandparents would often join this nuclear family. In most cases, 'family' was seen to extend beyond the immediate family.

As with other Aboriginal tribes, initiated males left the family camp, to join the single males' camp. Role definition among the Lardil families was as for most mainland tribes. Generally, males hunted game and fished. Females gathered food. As food and water was usually easily attained, much of these people's time was spent on non-economic activities. Doctor Memmott has identified some of these, in abridged form being,

i. resting, talking and singing
ii. playing games
iii. playing with children and teaching children (66)

Kinship obligations were strong among the Lardil families as were those of other Aboriginal tribes. Doctor Memmott has found that,

> *traditionally the Lardil shared food liberally according to kinship obligations as well as among the wider range of camp occupants. However they did not often share their artifacts,*

being possessive about them. (66) p 134

Obligation of the individual to his clan was of prime importance.

RELIGION

The Lardil tribe had a similar mythological belief system to other Australian Aborigines. Central to this belief was the concept of the Dreamtime. The Dreamtime was believed to exist today, but was inaccessible to normal people. The Lardil believed that the Dreamtime universe interacted and balanced with the universe of this world.

At the beginning of time, nature was as one. Animals, humans and plants developed as distinct entities as time went on. The traditional Aboriginal belief regarding Man's bond with nature was strong in the Lardil tribe. The beings of the Dreamtime originated the moiety systems. They also formed the landscape to its present state when they themselves became a part of the environment.

Man's responsibility to maintain an ecological balance in this world was taken very seriously by these people.

Doctor Memmott found that rituals and ceremonies did not occupy a major part of the Lardil tribe's time, as it did with many other Australian tribes. However religion did hold great significance in determination of the behaviour and attitudes of the Lardil people (66).

REVIEW

The findings of Doctor Memmott with regard to the social organization of the Lardil Aborigines are, in the main consistent with the broad findings of Chapter One. Minor variations have been noted, but these are usually of little significance, especially with respect to contemporary housing considerations. Several points raised in this section are of significance in this study, including the moiety system and the Lardil family structure. An understanding of the social organization of Lardil Aborigines has clear relev-

ance to housing design.

4:04 ENVIRONMENTAL PERCEPTION

THE ENVIRONMENT AND MAN

The Lardil tribe, along with all Australian Aborigines regard themselves as at one with nature. Their ancestral beings of the Dreamtime created the land and all nature as a seamless web. Affinity with the land was extremely strong among all Aborigines including the Lardil people. The Lardil, in identifying with nature, existed in harmony with their environment.

They believed that individuals shared forces or energy with the environment, especially in certain sacred locations. These forces were seen to be a control on groups and individual behaviour and movements.

Environmental phenomena as observed were seen as evidence of the existence of the separate Dreamtime world interacting with this world.

Very many places held special significance to the Lardil as these were sites on the paths of Dreamtime ancestral beings. At some of these sites, dangerous entities were believed to dwell.

Doctor Memmott has established that almost all of these places held permanent significance, without any permanent artificial structures. Thus these sites are usually invisible to outsiders (66).

The properties of the sacred sites were permanent as opposed to the Lardil Aborigines' own structures which were very temporary. Built structures were not used to a great extent, and the Lardil people shared the general Aboriginal view of artificial environments. Doctor Memmott has found that,

> *No special significance or symbolism was attached to these shelters as is often done in other cultures, nor were they embellished with any decorat-*

ion. They were not a 'home' in the Western sense. (66) p 147

These Aborigines' understanding of the environment was necessary for their survival. The ability to read signs of correct seasonal movements, allowed them to utilize their resources to the maximum.

The Lardil were very conscious of territoriality. Rules of land sharing were clear. Boundaries between 'countries' had great clarity especially near the coast where resources were best. Lardil people had a strong orientation to the sea also. Much of their diet was seafood.

FIRE

The Lardil Aborigines used fires extensively. Doctor Memmott has claimed that they did not have as strong a feeling for fires as suggested by other writers (66). He noted that the Lardil Aborigines used fires for cooking, heating, lighting and to deter insects. Memmott found no evidence of a symbolic importance being attributed to fire as claimed by Rapoport (66) (12).

However Memmott has written that,

(fires) were subtle environmental controls at night ... differentiating the space inside and outside of shelters and camps. (66) p 147

He also has suggested that to the Lardil, fires may be said to symbolize the dwelling. These findings show evidence that fires had at least social meaning, if not spiritual.

REVIEW

In general, the findings of Doctor Memmott are in accordance with the findings of Chapter One. Some minor variations in emphasis appear to be the extent of difference between the Lardil Aborigines and other Australian Aborigines.

Of significance to this study are the Aborigines' perception of nature, of fire and of the built environment.

4:05 TRADITIONAL SETTLEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Traditional camps and housing of the Lardil reflected their social organization, environmental perception and their climate. A picture of traditional settlements is a most necessary lead to an understanding of present housing requirements of the Lardil.

CAMPS

The Lardil camps were structured along similar lines to those of Australian Aborigines as discussed in Chapter One. Doctor Memmott has written,

> *For the Lardil, camps were not only places to sleep, eat and perform other bodily functions, but were also places of major social interaction and the base for economic activity.* (66) p 126

Doctor Memmott found that,

> *Lardil camp sites were fixed and permanent, but not always in use.* (66) p 127

Lardil patriclans moved between their fixed campsites. Many other Aboriginal tribes were more flexible in their siting choice, not necessarily adhering to perdetermined sites.

Lardil movements were determined by a variety of reasons. Primarily, certain of their campsites were more suitable for certain seasonal weather conditions. For example the Lardil had a separate campsite for cold weather and for wet weather. All camps were located with access to a water source. Water sources changed with the seasons, sometimes forcing changes of camps.

Several reasons for shifting camp have been identified (66)

- seasonal foods
- need for materials elsewhere (especially timber)
- pollution of existing campsite

. seasonal advantages of alternative sites
. death
. disputes
. boredom - desire for a new environment
. ceremonies - to be performed at special sites

Camps were structured on the basis of kinship, as was found in Chapter One to be the case for most Aborigines. Doctor Memmott identified three domicilliary types (64).

i. nuclear family - man, wife(s), uncircumcized sons and unmarried daughters.
ii. single men - mostly young
iii. widows - if not sleeping with son's camp

The siting of these domiciles was determined by the relationship between groups. Camps were located near close relatives, although they were always well clear of the males' parents-in-law.

Arrivals of newcomers at a camp which was already occupied resulted in some changes of location within the existing camp to acquire the necessary relationships. Similar adjustments took place for a while after a large group arrived at an unoccupied site. Each domicilliary group took possession of an area of space for sleeping and for storage of food and water. At night people remained within their domicilliary spaces, talking and singing around fires. Nocturnal spaces were structured with only a few metres between shelters. A single domicilliary group would usually occupy a single shelter at night. The perimeter of this domicilliary space was marked by fires or by subtle markings in the sand.

Daytime activity in most cases took place at a considerable distance from the nocturnal zone. Most rules of spatial location lost importance during the day.

As for other Aboriginal groups, the Lardil camps were structured along kinship lines. Refer to figure 4.2. Any subtle change of relationship or any dispute may have caused significant changes in the internal structure of the camp. Thus Lardil groups were undergoing constant variation in camp

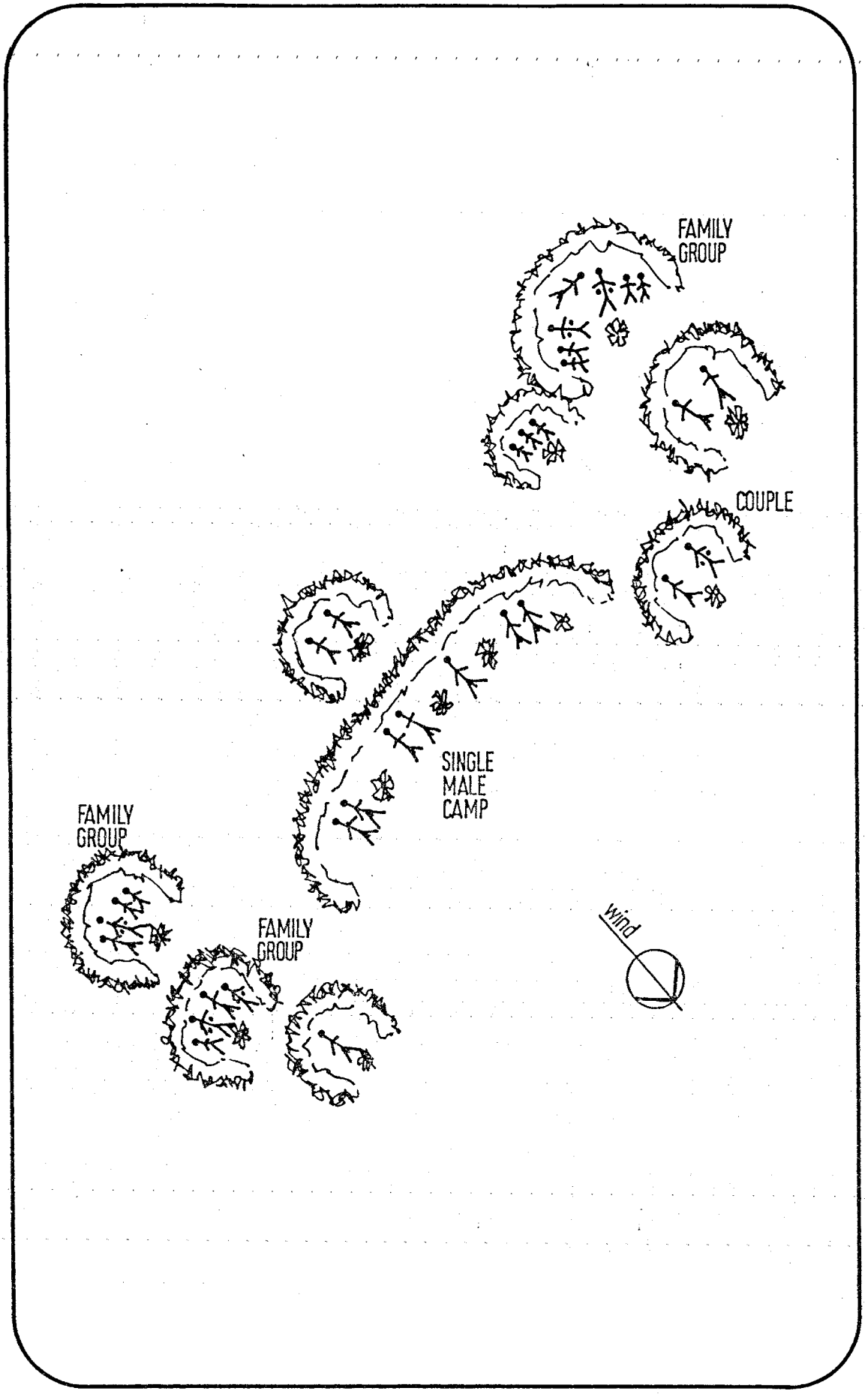


FIGURE 4.2 TRADITIONAL LARDIL CAMP LAYOUT FROM MEMMOTT (66)

structure and location.

SHELTERS

Doctor Memmott has referred to the findings of W. Roth who visited Mornington Island several times earlier in the century. Memmott and Roth have both observed that the Lardil people erected several forms of shelter, the form being determined by the prevailing climatic conditions (66). Refer to figure 4.3.

The Lardil used three basic types of shelter, being the windbreak, the wet weather shelter and the sunshade. These three structures were used with fires to form three main seasonal camps.

i. cold weather camp
ii. wet weather camp
iii. mosquito time camp

Cold Weather Camp

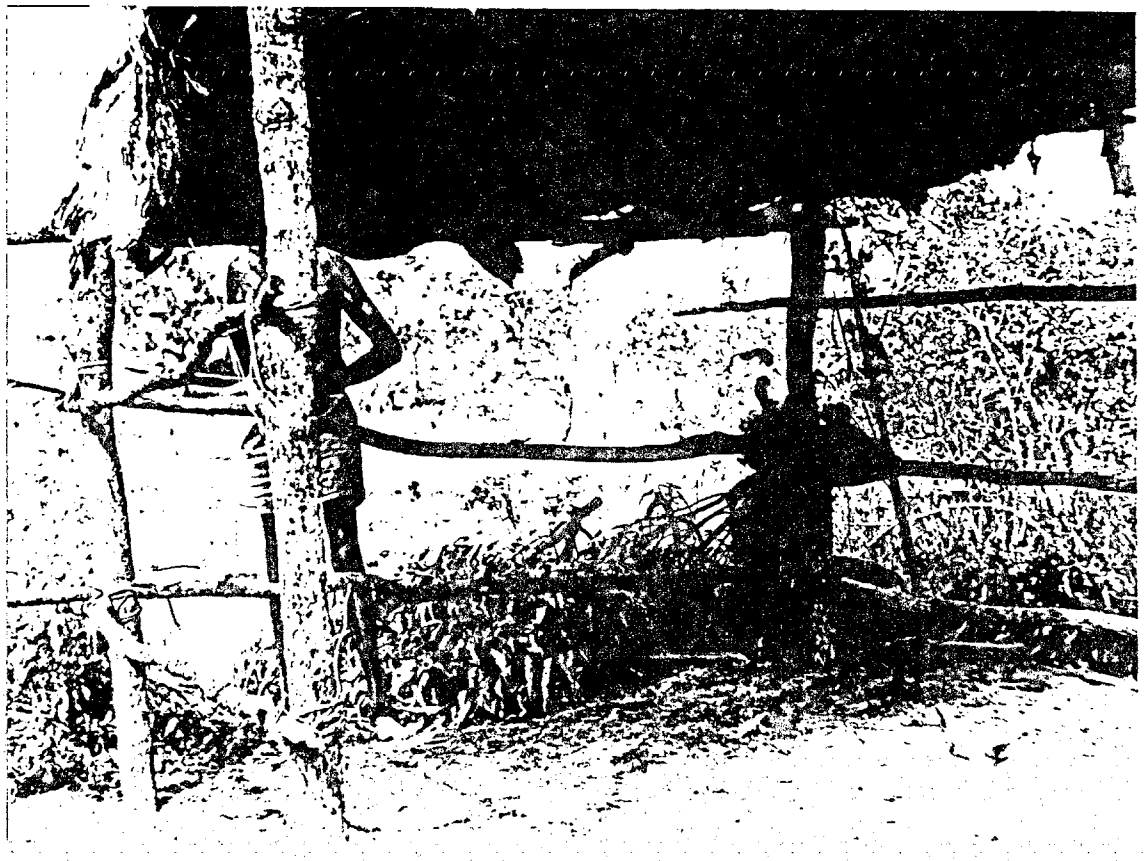
The cold weather camps were used from around July to October. This is when the coldest South-Easterly winds blow. Very little rain falls during this period. Thus simple windbreaks were the only shelter required.

Windbreaks were usually roughly circular of about a 270° arc. Walls were low enough to allow observation of neighbours. Any convenient foliage, timber and grasses were used for these windbreaks.

Separate windbreaks were usually constructed for daytime without the same strictness of camp structure rules.

Wet Weather Camp

The wet weather camps were used from December to March. Shelters erected during this period were relatively elaborate, so the groups stayed at these camps for longer periods.



SAPLING, BARK and FOLIAGE HUT photo : A.D.A.

SAPLING and FOLIAGE SHADE photo : A.D.A.

FIGURE 4.3 TRADITIONAL LARDIL SHELTERS

These rectangular shelters were built on a sapling frame for the corner posts and the roof structure. Roof sheeting was bark with grass and sometimes with sand as a load against wind forces. Walls were foliage with branches inserted into holes in the ground.

These shelters were used during the day as well as serving as nocturnal shelters.

Mosquito Camp

The mosquito camps were used in March and April when mosquitoes invaded nightly after the wet season. Mosquitoes were avoided by three methods.

i. location of camps in a windy position
ii. arrangement of fires to form a smoke screen
iii. burning of green grass and leaves as a repellant

Either windbreaks or wet weather shelters were used in conjunction with the above methods as was necessary.

Other Shelters

Night time structures were not normally used during the day. As days on Mornington Island are generally very hot, Aborigines sought the coolness of shade.

Several forms of shades were erected by the Lardil Aborigines. The simplest one was made by inserting a single thickly foliaged branch into a hole. More elaborate versions included a shelter using two forked sticks with branches spanning from a cross piece to the ground. A flat roofed shade with four forked posts and cross rails was sometimes constructed.

The Lardil people would have used one of these or a combination of shade and windbreak.

REVIEW

The traditional settlements of the Lardil tribe may be seen to have greater variety than some other Aboriginal tribes. Mornington Island has a climate of extremes and traditional camps, and shelters were developed to suit differing conditions.

Some artificial shelters were quite elaborate. Camp layout was sophisticated.

4:06 CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

EUROPEAN CONTACT - HISTORICAL OUTLINE

The Wellesley Islands, including Mornington Island, being located in a remote zone of Australia, experienced initial European contact relatively late in history. Early explorers including Abel Tasman and Matthew Flinders did not land on these islands.

Mornington Island is well separated from the early white settlement points. Europeans did not visit until this century.

W.E. Roth, 'Northern Protector of Aborigines', visited Mornington Island in 1901 and in 1902. He made several more visits observing the lifestyle and shelters of the Aborigines and made an account of his observations.

In 1905 the Wellesley Islands were proclaimed an Aboriginal reserve and Reverend Howard was made Protector. Howard visited Mornington Island in 1908 and in 1910. On his second visit he was farewelled by 200 Lardil people whom he described as strong and healthy. His gifts of tomahawks, calico, bottles and other items were very eagerly accepted by the Aborigines.

In 1914, a mission was established and administered by Reverend R. Hall. He held services in a simple English which Memmott suggests laid the foundation of the 'Aboriginal English' spoken today. Hall started a school and raised cows and goats - all being new to the Aborigines (66).

Hall was murdered by an Aborigine in 1917 despite the fact that most of the Lardil people respected him. The following year Mr. R. Wilson arrived to govern the mission. He separated Lardil children by placing them in dormitories and attempted to 'raise their intelligence' by educating them in Western ways (66).

By the 1920s a permanently occupied Lardil camp existed in the vicinity of the administration buildings of the mission. This camp remained through the 1930s when the mission compound included service buildings, dormitories and gardens.

In 1944, Reverend McCarthy became superintendent of the mission with a new staff. His stay was only of four years but he had a major impact on the Lardil Aborigines. McCarthy, an authoritarian leader, was hated and feared. He had no respect for Aboriginal culture and sought to impose a Western existence on the Lardil Aborigines. He discouraged any traditional Aboriginal activity such as dance, and ignored Aboriginal social rules including marriage.

Doctor Memmott has noted that McCarthy's approach effectively caused a breakdown of most traditional social systems of the Lardil people. Much of Lardil law was lost during this time, and even the country and patriclan system was weakened (66).

For most of the 1950s and 1960s, Reverend Belcher was superintendent. This man had a more sympathetic approach to administration of the Aborigines. Doctor Memmott has written,

> *Belcher recognized the importance of traditional culture as a means to maintain a self identity.*
>
> *(66) p 289*

Belcher was popular among the Aborigines, as a result of the respect he held for them and for their ways. He went so far as to combine elements of traditional religion with Christianity in his sermons.

In addition to this, during his time on the island significant practical progress was made. The dormitory system

for children was phased out, early in Reverend Belcher's time, with most children returning to live with their families.

Belcher made certain items available for purchase, including fuel stoves, stretchers and galvanised iron. Aborigines built their own shelters at this time in the vicinity of the white administration complex. These were typically timber structures with ant bed floors, bark walls and galvanised iron roofs.

During the late 1950s, 1960s and 1970s government housing was erected at the Mornington Island Settlement. These will be discussed in the next section of this thesis. Other government buildings were erected during the 1960s including school and hospital buildings.

CULTURAL CHANGE

The preceding discussion shows that the Lardil people have had elements of Western culture imposed upon them over what is relatively a very short period. The Lardil people have undergone a very significant transition, over very few generations. In many cases this transition has been forced by white administrators, involving a certain degree of stress for the Aborigines.

Today the Lardil people are certainly not fully acculturated. Doctor Memmott has found that the contemporary behaviour and attitudes of these Aborigines contain both Western and Aboriginal elements (66). The Lardil tribe has retained aspects of traditional culture despite various powerful forces encouraging the adoption of Western and christian rules.

Memmott referred to Doctor Reser's writings (22), and said that continuation of Aboriginal behaviour may be seen as,

> *a means of retaining a sense of social or cultural identity.* (66) p 468

There have been quick and severe changes in the Lardil Aboriginal culture with resultant social disintegration

and stress. This process has occured throughout this century since European contact, but was most evident under certain administrations, for example, that of McCarthy.

This section of Chapter Four will finally examine changes in Lardil culture under the two established headings of social organization and environmental perception.

An understanding of contemporary housing requirements will follow from this discussion. Again the point is made, that where contemporary circumstances are discussed, 1975 is the reference date (66).

Social Organization

Doctor Memmott has found that certain patterns of the traditional Lardil social structure survive today. Others have been weakened or destroyed (66).

Social behaviour patterns, including etiquette of approach and communication process, have retained a traditional character.

The system which has categorized Lardil Aborigines into eight sub-systems and two moieties is alive today. Kinship is still defined in terms of these traditional groupings. The 'windward' and 'leeward' definitions are applied among contemporary Lardil. They exist as two distinct groups in the modern village at Mornington Island. People from each of these two groups also camp at different locations when they have occasion to leave the village.

Kinship and other social divisions today clearly follow traditional structures. This grouping behaviour extends from external camp location to domiciliary siting within the Mornington Island village. Other activity, such as sitting positions at the pictures also reflects kinship ties (66).

Social roles have generally been retained from pre-European times. Women cook and still gather some foods. Males preside over food distribution. Western influences have necessarily introduced new tasks, which have been allocated to the

genders along Western lines. For example, women wash clothes and sweep dwellings. Men maintain machinery. One introduced activity which is highly popular is gambling, in which both males and females are involved.

The Lardil people spend most of their time at the settlement but do leave for camps on occasion. This may occur as a means of escaping the strictness of the Western lifestyle, and the social pressures existing at the settlement.

The traditional patriclan system does not hold today with respect to land holding of 'countries', due to fixed settlement into the village. Respect for the authority of elders has weakened also. White administrators have asserted their own authority and the authority of Christianity. This has lessened the group's esteem for the traditional leaders, and has led to an inability to maintain all traditional social orders.

New technology has been introduced in certain areas. Despite this some traditional ethics have survived. One such aspect of the old law which is alive today is the sharing ethic. This prevails along kinship lines, even with very prized modern items, including guns and boats (66).

Environmental Perception

Doctor Memmott has written,

> *Aboriginal identity is still very strong today despite the many changes in people environment relations.* (66) p 492

The domiciliary physical environment of the Lardil people has changed with the growth of the Mornington Island village.

European style housing has been provided on the island since the late 1950s. Doctor Memmott has established that the provision of this housing has certainly not destroyed behaviour patterns (66).

European housing has introduced the Aborigines to a new base of sensory experience. Materials such as glass and steel

have involved new and different responses. Probably of greater impact, is the fact that the housing provided has been of a quite different form from traditional domiciles. Spaces and shapes introduced with Western housing often have no basis in the traditional Aboriginals' perception of environment. The implications of these factors will be covered in the next section of this chapter.

The permanency of the new buildings has also seriously affected certain characteristics of existence. Lardil Aborigines are traditionally accustomed to continual changes of settlement location and structure. They have had to adjust. The new lifestyle involves shelters and settlements of a very permanent nature.

Despite the foreign character of the modern houses, Doctor Memmott has noted that this Western housing has not generated Western behaviour (66). Rather, traditional Aboriginal lifestyle and manner have been largely retained and houses have lost some Western character. Aborigines have modified houses to suit their own ways in many cases. In addition dwellings could be seen to have lost their Western 'purity' through lack of maintenance, and from damage resulting from frustration.

Little effort has been expended by residents of the Mornington Island Settlement to enhance the appearance of their dwellings. Maintenance and decoration of houses occupies a low priority among the Lardil Aborigines. Far greater time has been spent on developing external spaces to suit personal and social needs (66).

Activity generally is orientated toward external spaces. This aspect of environmental perception among todays Lardil people is in accordance with that of traditional Aborigines. External areas have greater importance to the Lardil people than enclosed spaces. Natural environments have more importance than built environments.

Fires have been an important part of the Lardil lifestyle from pre-European times until modern times. Hearths are still established for cooking and other activity and in

addition serve as social foci. These are built outside domiciliary structures, and are usually used in preference to electrical or artificial fueled appliances now available. During day time and at night Aborigines gather at hearths for various social activities (66).

CULTURAL TREND

Mornington Island is quite remote from all centres of Australian white population, both in character and location. This factor served to delay the tribe's inevitable contact with Europeans until relatively recently. Now, the island's remoteness allows its Aboriginal inhabitants to lead a self chosen existence in some respects.

Being a remote population, the Lardil people may be seen to have had more self determination than many mainland Aboriginal groups. It could be expected that they would have been subjected to less pressure to conform to white standards.

In fact, whites have been present for most of this century and pressure to change to Western qualities has been very intense at times. Many traditional concepts and structures have been weakened or destroyed by direct authoritarian force, and by subtle pressures attributable to extended contact with European Australians.

Direct pressure has included the administration under Reverend McCarthy in the 1940s. Provision of white implements and dwellings may be regarded as pressure of a less direct nature, both of which have had an affect on the Lardil Aborigines.

The character of artifacts around the Lardil domiciles is of relevance to this discussion. Such items include blankets, fireplaces, steel stretchers, firewood stacks, cooking utensils. These differ from the artifacts of white domiciles on the islands. Aborigines do not seek to possess such items as clocks, curtains, books, furniture and such like. Doctor Memmott has written that this suggests that the Aborigines have no desire to copy the material culture of the white people. However, certain items of European

lifestyle are seen as useful and have been accepted by the Aborigines.

As has been shown in this section, the lifestyle of Lardil Aborigines differs greatly from traditional times, while it also is starkly different from the lifestyle of white Australians. A very significant part of traditional Lardil Aboriginality has been retained, partly as a result of the remoteness of Mornington Island from white Australians.

Of significance in consideration of future trends is the difference in degree of acculturation between old Lardil people and the young. Doctor Memmott has noted that Lardil youths live with relatively less understanding and respect for traditional concepts and structures. This fact leads to the clear conclusion that traditional Lardil culture, while quite alive today, is fading as time progresses.

4:07 THE CONTEMPORARY SETTLEMENT

SETTLEMENT STRUCTURE

The contemporary (1975) Mornington Island Settlement (population 750) can be seen to comprise three distinct zones -

i. the mission
ii. the village
iii. the ridge

The mission is the administration centre of the settlement. This is the service centre which also includes medical buildings and staff residences.

The village, originally a traditional campsite, has been permanently occupied by Aborigines since establishment of the white mission. It comprises modified early government houses, and self built shelters based on traditional techniques.

The ridge has existed as a domiciliary entity since the 1950s. It is now dominated by houses provided by the Queensland Gov-

ernment in the early 1970s. These are sited along a long straight street.

The three zones are geographically distinguishable and are recognized as distinct elements by residents of the Settlements. Refer to figure 4.4

DOMICILES

Mornington Island Settlement includes a range of dwelling and shelter forms. These vary from traditional shelters of natural materials to modern modular buildings.

The Village

The village is characterized by self built and self sited dwellings, and by simple Western style housing which has been modified. Typically, these shelters and additions are simple structures of bush timber framing with galvanized steel sheeting. Refer to figure 4.5. In many cases these have been repaired or rebuilt before the onset of each wet season. The Aborigines modify these makeshift shelters with the intention to allow observation of their neighbours.

The Ridge

The houses of the ridge are dominated by elevated modular houses provided by the Queensland Government. These are raised on steel pipe columns and are asbestos cement sheeted. The ridge houses are of a Western styled layout. These were designed as three bedroom houses with bathroom, kitchen and living room, and a verandah. Refer to figure 4.6.

Additional Shelters

In addition to the main buildings, simple temporary shelters have been built by Aborigines, mainly for daytime activity. These have been erected by Aborigines both in the village and the ridge area.

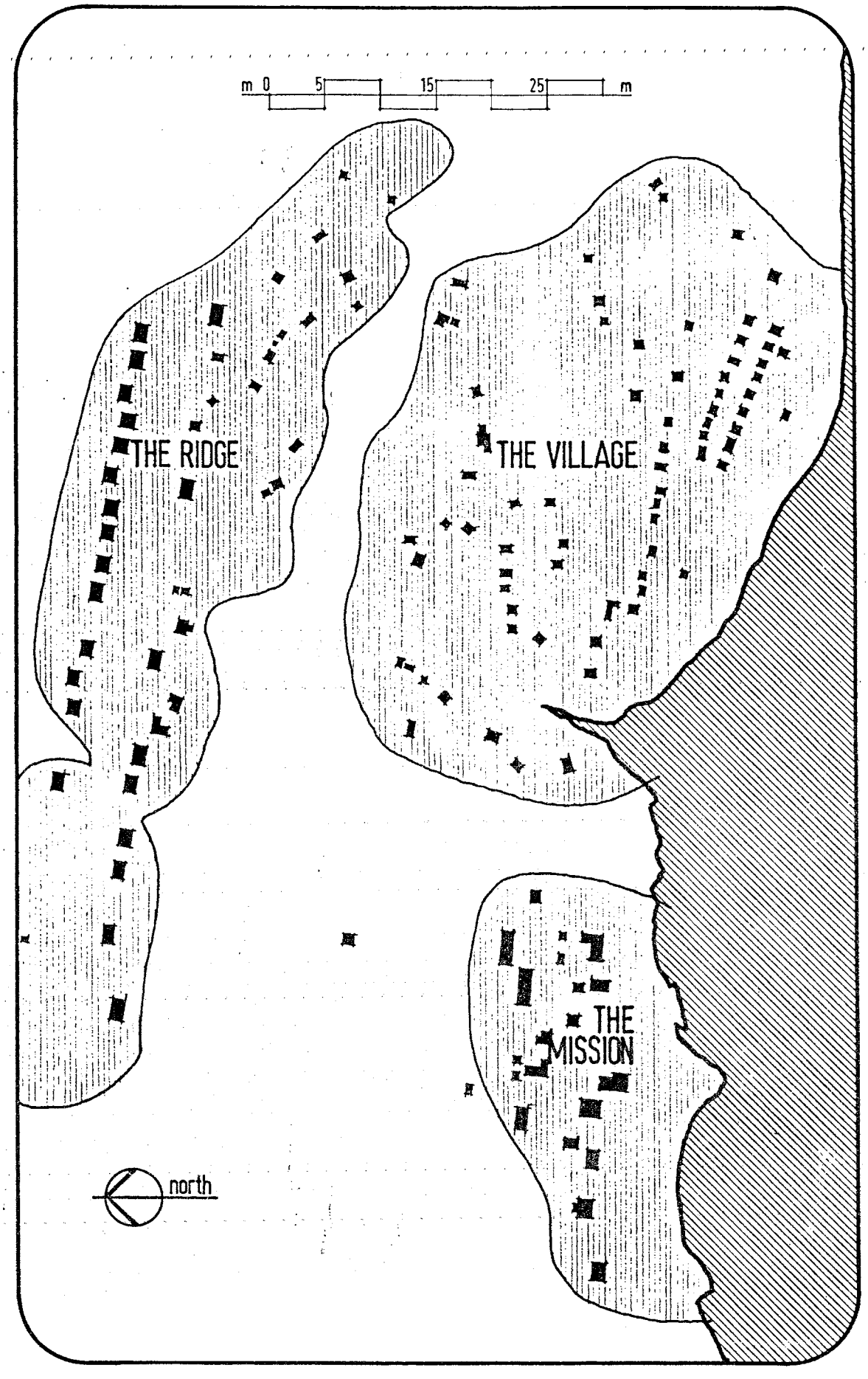
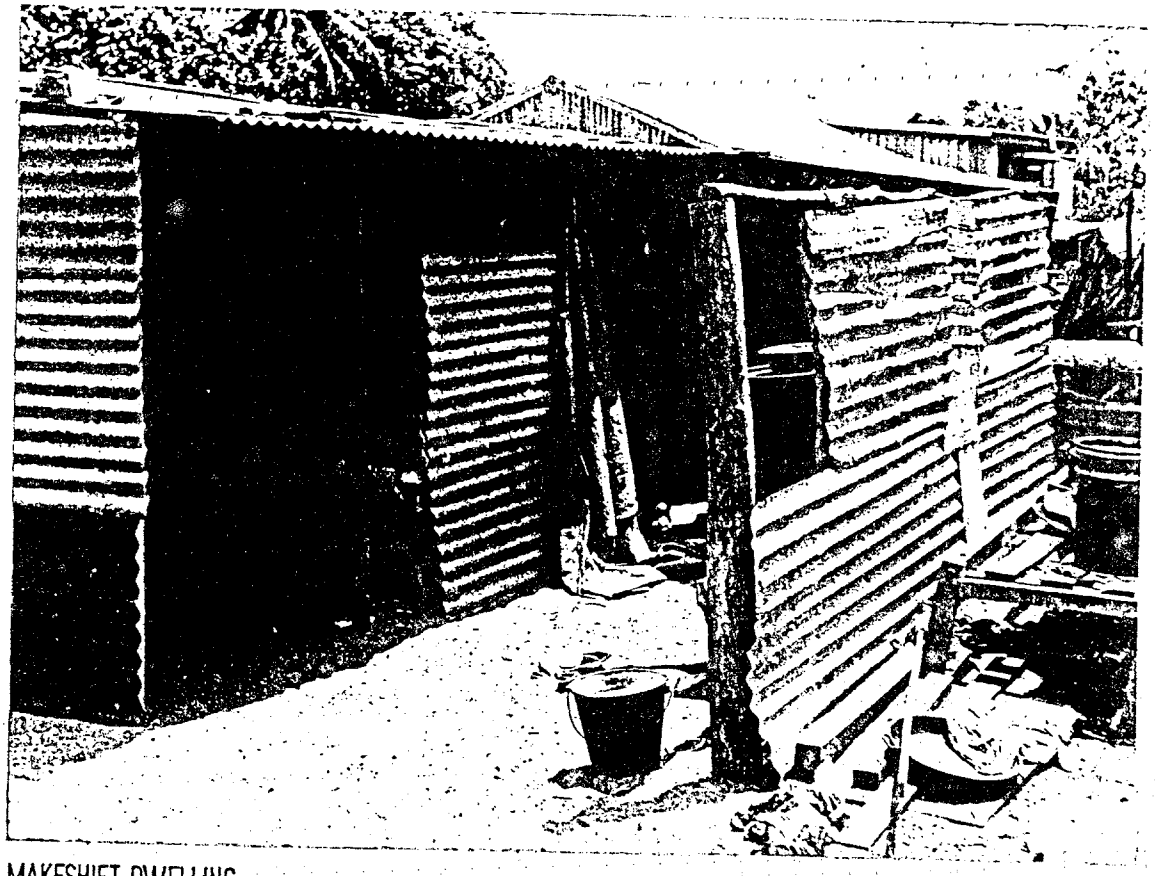


FIGURE 4.4 THE MORNINGTON ISLAND MISSION SETTLEMENT FROM MEMMOTT (66)



MAKESHIFT DWELLING

photo : A.D.A.

ADAPTED DWELLING

photo : A.D.A.

FIGURE 4.5 MORNINGTON ISLAND 'VILLAGE' HOUSING

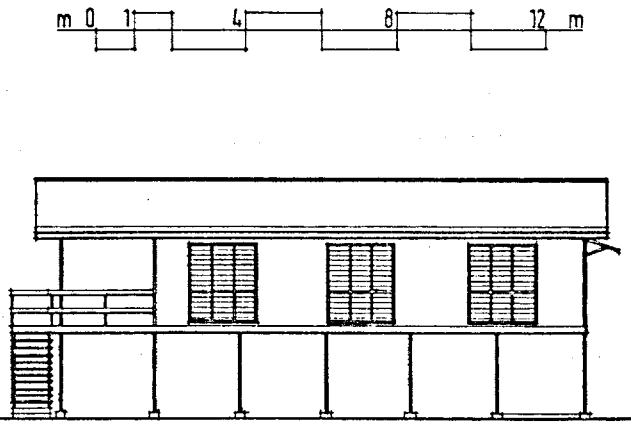


FIGURE 4.6 MORNINGTON ISLAND 'RIDGE' HOUSING FROM MEMMOTT (66)

Shades have been built where tree shade is inadequate, especially during the hotter months. Refer to figure 4.7. Windbreaks have also been a common feature of the settlement. Both types of shelter have been based on traditional forms and techniques. In addition to natural materials, galvanized steel and canvas have been used.

DOMICILIARY BEHAVIOUR

An understanding of Aborigines' patterns of use of their dwelling spaces is necessarily the key to understanding their present requirements with respect to housing. Spaces introduced with European housing often have no relation to the traditional perception of environment. As mentioned earlier however, Doctor Memmott has found that the Lardil Aborigines use their domiciliary spaces largely in accordance with traditional patterns. Western housing and administration have not generated Western behaviour (66).

DOMICILIARY GROUPING

Doctor Memmott has established that a repeated unit of domiciliary grouping is evident throughout the Mornington Island Settlement. This is especially clear through the village. Memmott has called these units multiple family units, which he has defined as,

> *spatially proximate domiciles in which live predominantly blood relations.* (66) p 341

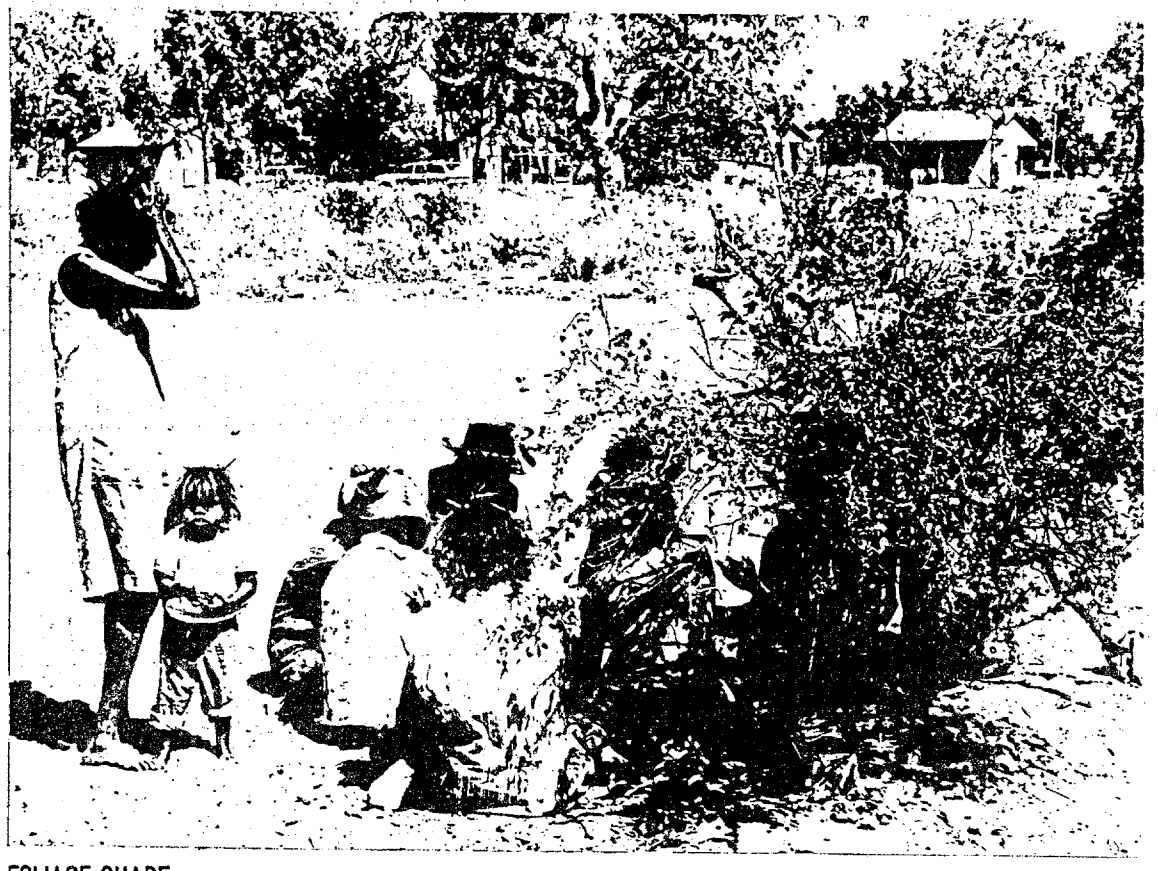
The multiple family unit is headed by a primary nuclear family - usually an elderly married couple or widowed partner. The families of their children and grandchildren reside in close proximity thereby forming the multiple family unit.

These units are not fixed or stable. Memmott has noted that there is considerable movement between residences. This is enabled by the individual's ability to reside temporarily in a number of multiple family units (66).

The multiple family unit system can be seen to have replaced the traditional 'patriclan' and 'country' system outlined

CLOTH SHADE

photo : A.D.A.



FOLIAGE SHADE

photo : A.D.A.

FIGURE 4.7 MORNINGTON ISLAND TEMPORARY SHELTERS

earlier. Travel between units is analagous to inter-country travel, prevalent in pre-European times.

The groups referred to as windward and leeward have retained their distinct identities. Individuals of the settlement still identify with one of these.

A secondary grouping structure has been defined by Doctor Memmott. The Mornington Island Aborigines collect in groups, especially through the daytime to take part in various group activities. Individuals usually return to a single identifiable dwelling. Memmott has referred to this dwelling as the 'domiciliary social centre'. These groups have been referred to as 'social alliance groups' (66).

Individuals of social alliance groups share daytime social activity at their chosen domiciliary social centre. These groups are not necessarily true to kinship lines. As in traditional times, the Lardil Aborigines do not strictly observe kinship grouping rules during the daytime (66).

Activity

Activity both of night time and daytime, is orientated towards the exterior spaces of the Settlement. General activity has changed somewhat from pre-European times. Hunting and gathering are rarely necessary, as food is available from the mission. Religious ceremony is rarely practiced. Leisure time activity differs from traditional times. The introduction of Western implements and ideas has changed the character and type of much activity.

When desired, Aborigines erect temporary shelters for external activity. Refer to figure 4.7. Another form of temporary 'place' is established by laying a blanket or canvas on the ground. Fires serve as another form of social focus points.

Activity at these places includes the primary pastime of conversation - talking and gossiping and also gambling. People gather at times to sing and dance. Recorded music is very popular as well. 'Country' music is played on

cassette recorders by many groups. Handicraft, as a form of income earning industry is quite prevalent.

Generally activity is derived from Western forms but adjusted in many cases to suit the Aborigines' own attitudes.

Character of Domiciles

Certain features are common to most domiciles of the Mornington Island Settlement. Permanent dwellings physically dominate domiciliary spaces, although most activity apart from sleeping takes place outside of these. These dwellings are in the form of self constructed buildings, prefabricated cottages of the 1950s and 1960s or modern Western styled houses.

As mentioned earlier, temporary shelters are often a feature of the external domiciliary spaces. Hearths and ground fires are very common. Refer to figure 4.8. Separate earth closets and enclosures for these are a usual feature in the village. Fruit trees are quite popular and a few gardens are cared for. Refer to figure 4.8.

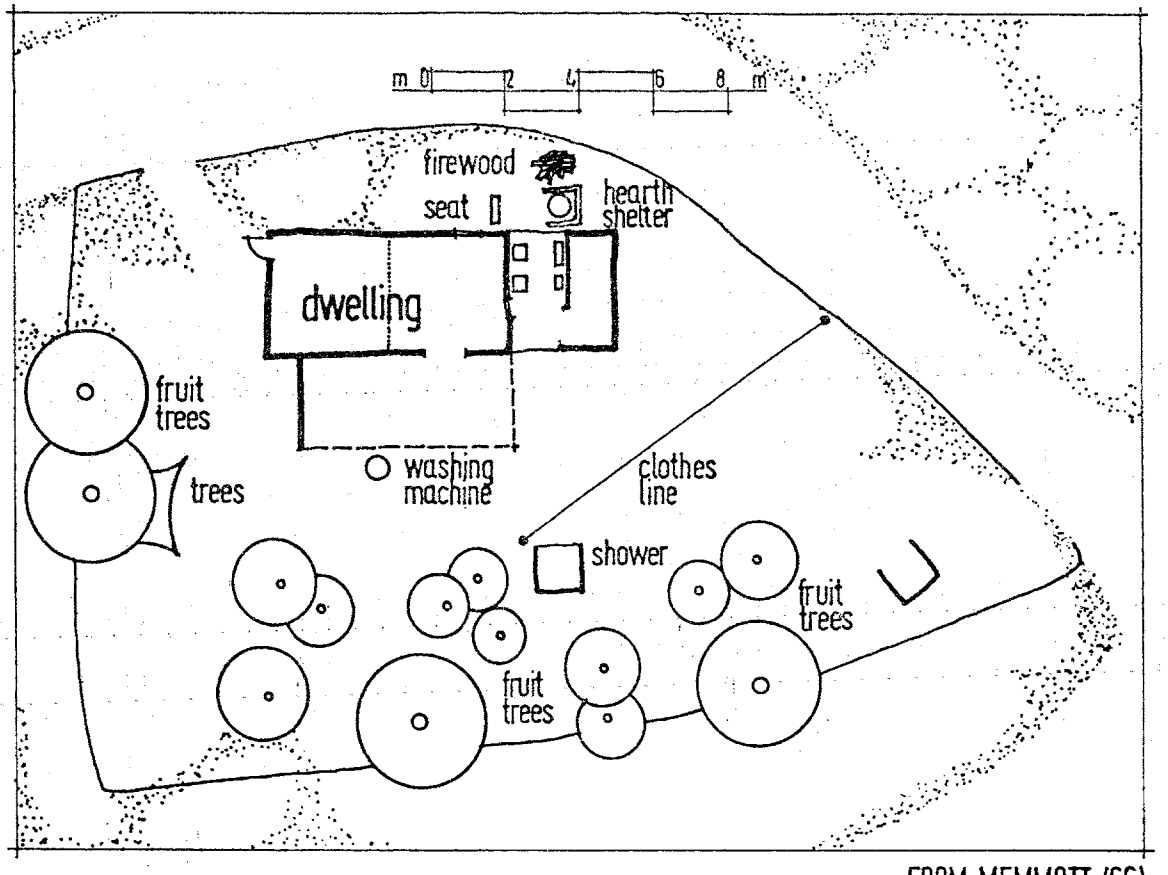
Items associated with Aborigines' activity are casually left in the open in most external domiciliary spaces. This is partly due to lack of storage area, but more significantly, tidyness in a Western sense has not been a necessary aspect of Aboriginal consciousness. These items include firewood stacks, cooking and eating utensils, blankets and food benches.

The edges of domiciliary spaces are usually clearly marked. This marking may be in the form of a wire fence (erected to keep animals outside) or may be of a more subtle nature. Domiciliary spaces are often swept or raked, and the edges of the swept ground may also serve to define edges of the space (66).

Generally, domiciles differ considerably in character from those of Western settlements. This different character arises from several factors. Aborigines' preference to use external spaces as discussed is one factor. Their lack of interest in maintenance and decoration may be seen as another.

GROUP WITH EXTERNAL HEARTH

photo A.D.A.



FROM MEMMOTT (66)

FIGURE 4.8 USE OF EXTERNAL SPACES

Many white Australian observers would regard the settlement as being in a poor state. Perceived untidyness and degradation of dwellings may be interpreted as negative qualities. A deeper examination of reasons for the differing character of Aboriginal Settlements such as that on Mornington Island, leads to a more truthful understanding.

NEW HOUSING

The Mornington Island Aborigines have been provided with modern Western housing located along a straight street in the 'Ridge' area. Refer to figure 4.6. These D.A.I.A. houses are prefabricated steel buildings elevated on steel columns. Twenty such dwellings were built in the early 1970s. These ridge houses are of a Western and tropical character. It appears that a main design objective for the ridge houses was to modify the extremes of the Mornington Island climate.

As seen from the first section of this chapter, extremely humid heat and drenching rain are characteristic of this climate. Full height louvre openings, wide overhangs and elevation of buildings are sound environmental control features. Thus, these D.A.I.A. houses may be judged as successful from an environmental control aspect.

Of at least equal importance is the degree of success in terms of social organization and environmental perceptions. Problems may be expected in this respect as the ridge houses are aboslutely European and suburban in style.

The final section of this chapter presents a discussion on the performance of the dwellings in terms of the above qualities.

USER BEHAVIOUR IN NEW HOUSING

The following discussion examines the use and behaviour patterns involved in new housing on Mornington Island. This discussion is presented with a view to reaching an understanding of the implications of the social organization and

environmental perception of the Mornington Island Aborigines.

In discussing Aborigines' use of new housing, Doctor Memmott has referred to the work of Doctor Reser (66)(22). Reser identified specific areas of transition problems which relate directly to the model presented in Chapter Two on transition problems in Aboriginal Housing. Reser's parameters in abridged form were:

i. inflexibility and permanence of environment
ii. household density and privacy
iii. inability to observe freely
iv. new maintenance responsibility

These criteria, adapted from Reser and the transition model of Chapter Two will each be discussed with respect to the modern housing provided on Mornington Island.

Inflexibility

Inflexibility of Western housing has been seen as a potential stress source for Aborigines making the transition from a traditional situation. Traditional camps were very fluid and unstable whereas modern settlements structures are very rigid and permanent.

Regarding the modern housing on Mornington Island, Doctor Memmott has not seen this as a major problem. He has explained that,

> *In general the occupants appear to have adapted their conventional behaviour patterns into architectural spaces provided in and around the housing.* [66] p 363

In fact most gathering occurs in the external spaces of the settlement. Therefore the artificial restriction of the houses is not regarded as a problem of great magnitude. Ridge people do in fact spend much time at domiciliary social centres of the village.

The spaces provided within the houses are in the main, not used in the manner intended by the designer (State Works

Department - Queensland). The upstairs interiors are used for sleeping and storage. This includes bedrooms and the living room. Apart from sleeping, the upstairs space is rarely used except in very wet periods or in very cold periods. Very little furniture is used in the houses.

The kitchens are rarely used, as almost all meals are cooked on external fires. Clothes washing also is carried out on fires in steel drums, rather than in the open laundries provided. Showers are popular. 'Ridge' people in fact allow 'village' relatives to share their shower facilities.

Verandahs are very well accepted and are well used, partly because they allow extensive observation of surroundings. Some Aborigines sleep on these verandahs.

The cool underneath area of these elevated houses is well used. This area serves the purposes of the traditional shade and also acts as wet weather protection. Refer to figure 4.9. Aborigines have also adapted spaces to their requirements. For example windbreaks have been erected in the popular undersides of these houses. Refer to figure 4.9.

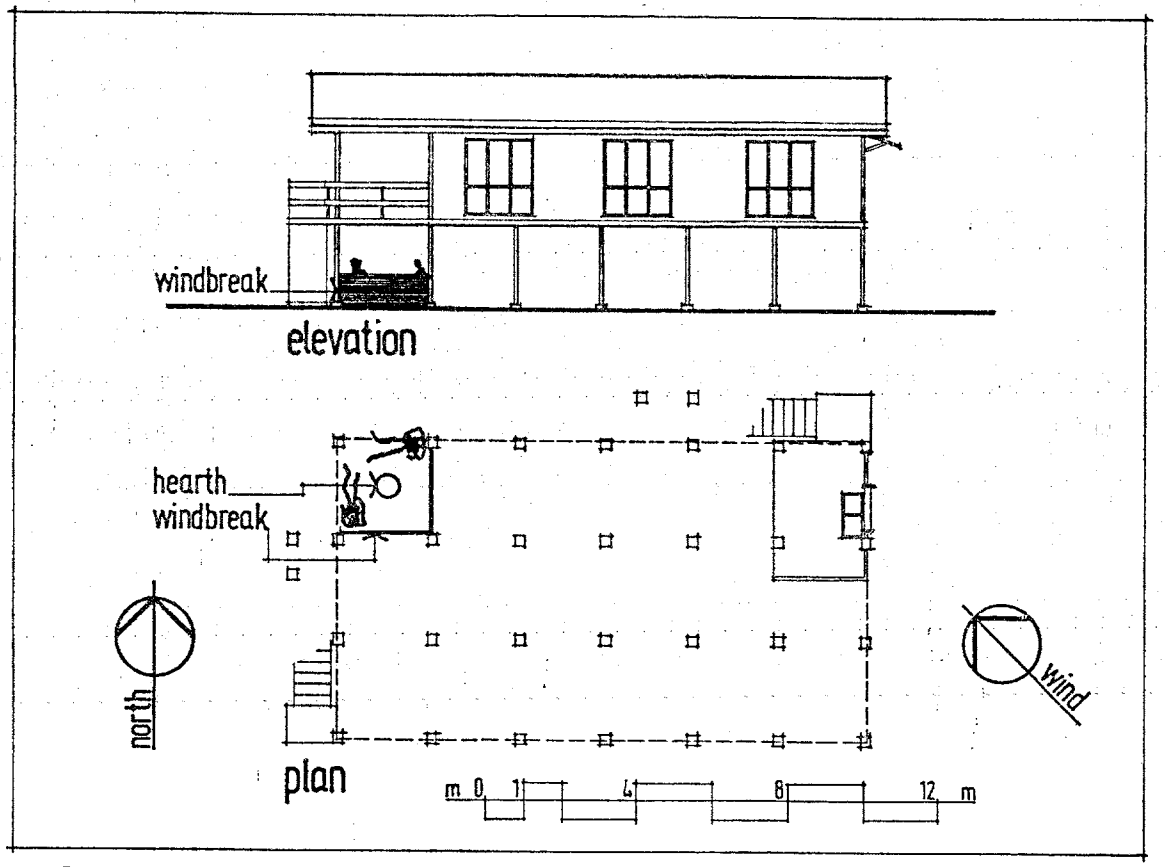
Another perceived problem area in Aboriginal housing is the permanence of dwelling location. Traditional domiciles were moved to suit changing social relationships. This is not seen as a strong restriction on Lardil Aborigines. Doctor Memmott has found that residential mobility is high, negating the significance of this stress source. Permanence of dwelling location is not seen as an insoluble problem by Memmott with regard to the Lardil people (66).

The potential problem in Western housing for Aborigines of inflexibility is also not accepted as such by Memmott. Most Lardil activity occurs externally. Also provided spaces have, in cases, been adapted to Aboriginal needs. Fixed dwellings, therefore, do not restrict Lardil Aborigines from social activity (66).

This non-use of the government housing certainly does not carry any implication of success however.

PREFERENCE FOR DOWNSTAIRS AREA

photo : A.D.A.



ADDITION OF WINDBREAK

FROM MEMMOTT (66)

FIGURE 4.9 USE OF D.A.I.A. 'RIDGE' HOUSING

Household Density and Privacy

Domiciliary density in Western housing relative to traditional camps has been identified as a potential problem in Aboriginal housing. As modern houses have been provided, Aborigines have often been seen to occupy them as a multiple family unit. This has often lead to high occupant density, and to carry a potential for loss of privacy.

Again Doctor Memmott did not accept that this was a significant problem with respect to the Lardil Aborigines (66). Aborigines accept close personal space, especially with associated kin. Sharing domiciliary space with relatives is thus acceptable.

Families often sleep together in one room. Some of the ridge houses provide for a full multiple family unit with each nuclear family in a separate room. All single males may also occupy a single room.

Privacy is achieved by other means than architectural barriers. Traditional avoidance behaviour still operates and residential shifts are commonplace.

Traditionally, everyday behaviour was open to view. This applies still today, despite the introduction of Western housing as most activity occurs outside of the houses. Any concealed activity is regarded as suspicious and shameful.

Thus, lack of privacy is not regarded as a major problem for Mornington Island Aborigines as traditional processes still operate. Again, the point is made that non-usage of housing, is not favourable testimony to that housing.

Observation

Inability to observe neighbours' activity from European housing has been identified as a further restriction for Aboriginal occupants.

One problem of observation is inherent in the siting of the ridge dwellings. They are located on a straight line along a street. This restricts the view between domiciles.

The houses themselves on Mornington Island can be seen to be quite sympathetic to Aboriginal needs in this regard. These houses have full height window openings. Despite this, observation is certainly restricted to some degree.

The criterion of observation is again not necessarily applicable to Mornington Island Aborigines, as they are rarely indoors during the daylight hours.

Maintenance

The maintenance involved in use of European housing has been accepted as a serious problem for Aborigines involved in transition from traditional circumstances. This applies as well to Mornington Island Aborigines.

Problems of maintenance arise as traditionally orientated Aborigines place little importance on their dwelling. No effort is spent on showing a pride in their dwelling. People rarely perform any cleaning or maintaining functions for their houses.

Doctor Memmott has written,

> *There does not appear to be any constant expression of 'pride of ownership' of houses through decorating them, or through regular maintenance or through extensive landscaping, as might be the case in many Western situations.* (66) p 387

Memmott has noted that broken light bulbs are often not replaced, nor are broken louvres. Guttering is in many cases, in need of repair. Various damages and degratory signs are not attended to (66).

Memmott has also found that this is not attributable to ignorance, as the necessary skills have been shown to the Aborigines. This leads to the clear conclusion that the poor maintenance of dwellings results from the Aborigines' attitudes to material possessions and to built structures.

REVIEW

The most significant conclusion of the preceding discussion is that modern European housing on Mornington Island has not seriously altered or restricted the Aboriginal character of the Lardil people's lifestyle. A major reason for this has been the residents' strong orientation to external spaces. Any identified faults of housing provided have been reduced in consequence as the Aborigines do not occupy the houses for many waking hours of the day.

Beside this behaviour characteristic, it has been shown that Mornington Island Aborigines have not allowed the European housing to destroy traditional social processes. Social relationships and behaviour have maintained a strong Aboriginal character.

4:08 CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER

Chapter Four has looked in detail at the Lardil Aborigines of Mornington Island. Both their traditional and contemporary way of life have been examined. It has been shown that the traditional social organization and environmental perception of the Lardil Aborigines is almost completely in accordance with those typical of Aborigines. Findings of this chapter under these headings concur with the theoretical findings of Chapter One. Differences of emphasis with other tribes do occur, as may be expected. Many of these slight variations can be attributed to the differing and extreme climate of Mornington Island.

Traditional settlements have been examined. These have been shown to be structured along kinship lines, as was found to be the case through the theoretical discussions of Chapter One.

The detailed social structuring of the Lardil tribe differed in some respects from other Aboriginal tribes. Their distribution around the island and within camps was therefore of a particular character.

The cultural change of the Lardil Aborigines has been shown to be of a lesser magnitude than that experienced by many Aborigines. This has been mainly as a result of the Lardil tribe's isolation from white centres. The contemporary Lardil people possess both Aboriginal and European characteristics. Social organization has undergone change, but certainly retains many traditional qualities. The same may be said for environmental perception of these people. Stress of transition has been suffered to differing degrees.

The climax of Chapter Four has been the examination of the contemporary Mornington Island Settlement, drawing from earlier data of the chapter. This discussion on Aboriginal behaviour within the settlement has been presented as the final test of early theoretical findings.

Factors discussed at the end of Chapter Four have been the result of an extended study of a particular Aboriginal settlement. As a result, this chapter has special relevance to the hypothesis on a practical level.

Findings of Chapter Four with regard to inappropriate architectural design, and to stress factors involved in housing, have direct relevance to key elements of the hypothesis.

The final chapter will use material of this chapter in a final discussion on the validity of the thesis.

CHAPTER FIVE

I am broken and poor,
Dressed in rags from a white man's back,
But do not think I am ashamed.
I am proud,
Though humble and poor and without a home ...

Kath Walker (1)

CONCLUSIONS

5:01 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER

Chapter Five is the concluding chapter of this thesis, and has two aims. Firstly, the validity of the initial hypothesis of this thesis will be ascertained, and secondly, a set of broad guidelines for the design of Aboriginal housing will be provided.

In order to test the hypothesis, material of earlier chapters will be drawn from. Practical findings of Chapters Three and Four will be reviewed with respect to the theoretical findings of Chapter Two. The Model of transition stress in Aboriginal housing of Chapter Two will serve as the basis for discussion on points revealed in Chapters Three and Four. This model is presented again on the following page. Findings on architectural consultation from Chapters Two and Three will then be discussed.

These sections, on transition stress and on architectural consultation will lead to the climax of this thesis - the testing of the hypothesis.

Following this, the guidelines for architects involved in Aboriginal housing will be presented.

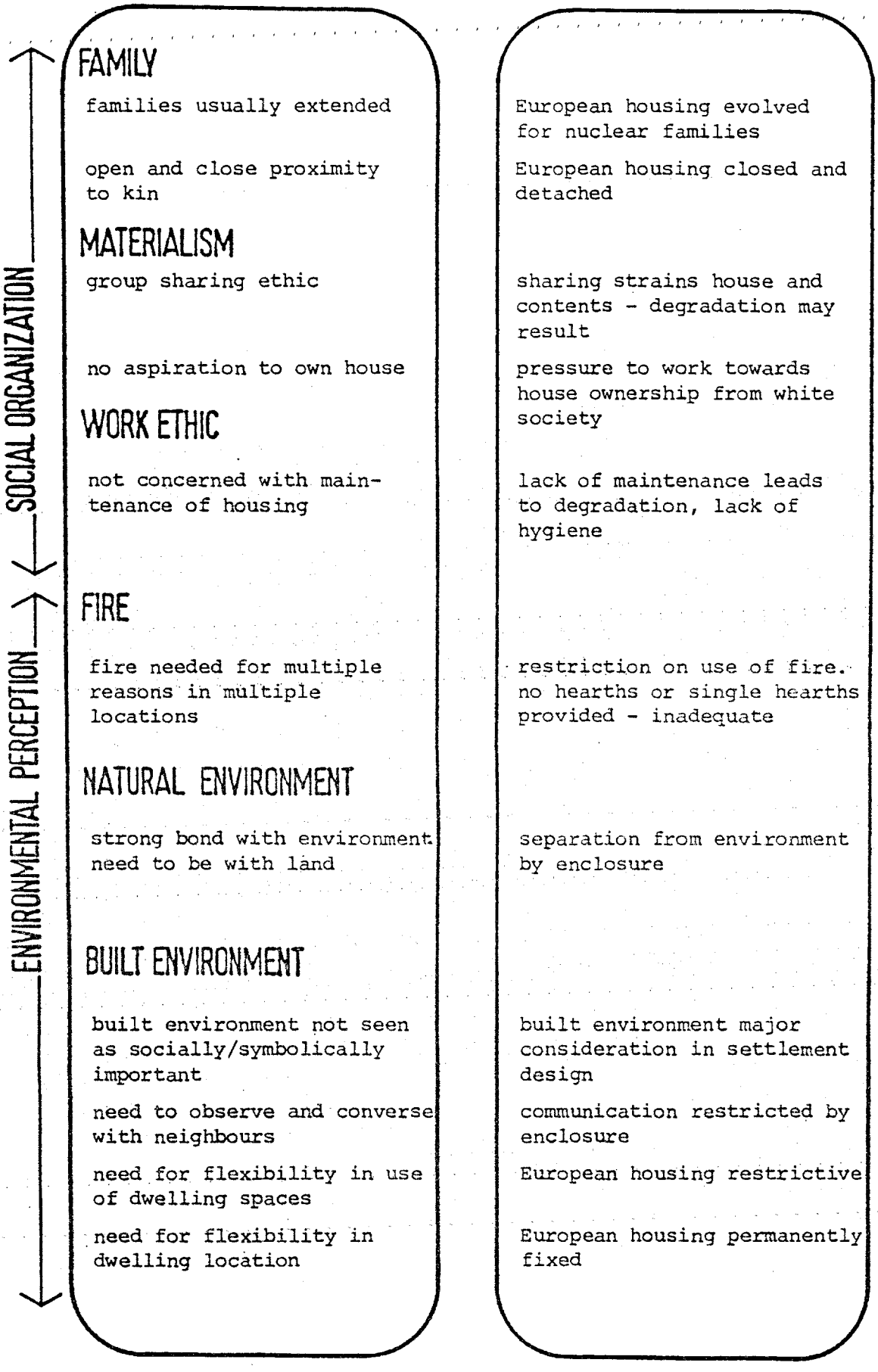


FIGURE 2·3 MODEL OF TRANSITION STRESS IN ABORIGINAL HOUSING

5:02 TRANSITION STRESS IN ABORIGINAL HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

This thesis has employed the concept of transition, in order to determine the special needs of Aborigines with respect to housing. Any housing solution which has introduced a degree of transition stress may be regarded as a failure. Avoidance of transition stress through appropriate design may be achieved by a clear understanding of variables involved in housing design for the culturally different. The concept of transition stress was discussed in Chapter Two as a theoretical study and was summarised in figure 2.3.

Chapters Three and Four, looking specifically at practical research, have revealed certain factors of transition stress in Aboriginal housing. This section of the concluding chapter summarises the extensive practical findings of these later chapters and uses these as a thorough test of the theoretical Model (figure 2.3).

CHAPTER THREE CONCLUSIONS

Chapter Three examined the qualities of existing Aboriginal housing and settlement design. Non-urban Aborigines live in a wide variety of settlement types in Australia, a range of which was viewed in Chapter Three. Each of these smaller case studies will be used to test the accuracy of the Model presented in Chapter Two.

This discussion will follow the headings established in Chapter Two under the areas of 'Social Organization' and 'Environmental Perception'. All case studies of Chapter Three will be drawn from.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Family

Recognition of Aboriginal family structure differed in the design of the various settlement types discussed in Chapter

Three. Looma houses were designed to each accommodate an individual nuclear family. This did not work in practice. Most houses were occupied by greater numbers of people. Up to twenty persons lived in some dwellings. Over-crowding and loss of privacy were seen to result from the Aborigines' patterns of use of these buildings. It is worthwhile to note also that one Looma house served as a separate domicile for single males. This is also in accordance with earlier theoretical findings.

The Queensland D.A.I.A. house (figure 3.2) was designed to accommodate a larger number of people than the nuclear family; a design quality which also worked in practice.

The Laverton house was designed especially for occupation by an extended family. It is most unfortunate that this dwelling was never tested in use by more than four people. Other deficiencies of the Laverton house prevented full use and testing of this building by an extended family.

Aborigines of other settlements discussed were seen to have retained the traditional attitude to family, which would be inappropriate for European housing.

Looma, as the clearest test of the theoretical model on this point, has shown that overcrowding problems may result when Aboriginal family structure is not considered in housing design.

Materialism

Study of Aborigines in most cases in Chapter Three showed that Aborigines do not accept European ideals, and do not aspire to become Europeans. While many aspects of white culture have been accepted by Aborigines, they have generally given little importance to material wealth. This is evidenced at Looma; Aborigines there have shown little enthusiasm to follow the transitional programme to European house ownership. Also, the group sharing ethic, still prevalent today, has led to overcrowding and overuse of houses and house contents.

Rejection of the Laverton house may be seen as partly due to the Aborigines' lack of interest in ownership of a dwelling. Strongest proof of Aborigines' lack of enthusiasm for material gain, can be seen in the outstation movement. The Aboriginal outstation movement is clear evidence of these people's rejection of the materialistic white society.

Aborigines' differing attitude to material gain, while not definable as a direct source of stress in Aboriginal housing, has been shown to be a basic barrier against success in this field. This movement is partly due to this fact.

Work Ethnic

The available research on settlements discussed in Chapter Three makes little direct reference to Aborigines' attitudes to employment and maintenance. Maintenance of dwellings has been seen as being poor among Aborigines as a result of the Aboriginal attitude to the work ethic. Aborigines have generally had little concern for cleaning and maintenance of dwellings, in the European sense.

This fact, has been confirmed by D.A.I.A. officers and architects involved in Queensland Government Aboriginal housing.

Looma houses, due to their poor quality of design and finishes offer little incentive for maintenance. Thus, it would be difficult to judge the true nature of Aborigines' maintenance efforts from the Looma village.

The outstation movement has been seen to evidence Aborigines' lack of interest to participate in white communities. Maintenance of personal domiciles is an integral part of the rejected lifestyle.

Attitude to the work ethic cannot be judged to be a stress source for Aborigines from the findings of Chapter Three. However, this factor is a problem in Aboriginal housing as dwellings commonly do degrade with lack of maintenance.

Fire

Fire has been shown to be used by Aborigines for multiple reasons in multiple locations.

Looma housing provides no hearths with the dwellings. Available research on Looma has made little suggestion that this caused any stress amongst Looma Aborigines. Cooking hearths were located at some distance from the domiciles, which was shown to cause certain practical difficulties. The Laverton house provided space for a single fire at the centre of the dwelling. This may be seen as a restrictive allowance for fire usage.

It could be expected that at both of these settlements, fires would have been used extensively in a free manner in external spaces of the settlements. This removed any suggestion of restriction of fire usage as a source of stress.

The outstation movement Aborigines and those of Jigalong and Yatala, would undoubtably use and locate fires in a near traditional manner.

Restriction on the use of fire in Aboriginal housing has not been shown to be a problem for residents, from research on the settlements covered in Chapter Three.

Natural Environment

All settlements viewed in Chapter Three showed clear evidence of Aborigines' affinity with the natural environment. Looma Aborigines used the open space of the breezeways quite extensively. External orientation of activity for this group of Aborigines was also noted. Internal spaces were poorly used, although this can be explained by the uncomfortable environmental conditions of the house interiors.

Queensland government officers involved in Aboriginal housing, have recognized Aborigines' preference for external

spaces, especially areas away from dwellings.

Laverton Aborigines rejected their house design, partly because the building so restricted their association with their surroundings. Over severe enclosure was seen as a major cause of the Laverton house's failure.

Aborigines of Jigalong, Yatala and the outstation movement have refused to accept most aspects of white Australian society. Affinity with the land is the major force in Aboriginal outstation trends.

Aborigines' strong bond with nature has been shown in Chapter Three to be a major source of stress for Aborigines in white style housing.

Built Environment

Several facets of traditional Aboriginal perception of the built environment may be regarded as potential sources of stress when European housing is introduced.

The principle factor is the lack of social or symbolic importance attributed to artificial structures by Aborigines. This is supported by findings of Chapter Three. Looma houses were treated with little respect. The Laverton house was rejected. Queensland Aborigines have been seen to prefer areas away from built dwellings. Outstation Aborigines have rejected the restriction of white housing altogether. All of these patterns are partly explainable by reference to Aborigines' non-respect for modern built structures.

The need to observe activity of neighbours is often restricted by European housing. This has been recognized as a significant problem with the housing provided at Looma, and as one of the most significant aspects of failure of the Laverton house. Both schemes restricted the occupants ability to observe their surroundings.

The need for flexibility with respect to space usage and dwelling location has not been identified as a problem of real significance in the settlements discussed.

Chapter Three findings support certain assertions of the theoretical Model from Chapter Two.

Low regard for the social importance of artificial dwellings may be shown to be an integral part of the non-success of many Aboriginal housing schemes. Inability to observe surroundings is regarded as a serious defect of European designed housing schemes, and is seen as a clear source of stress for Aborigines. Inflexibility of European housing has not been shown to be a major problem for housing of Aborigines in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER FOUR CONCLUSIONS

Chapter Four examined, in some detail, the variables involved in housing for the Lardil Aborigines of Mornington Island. The findings of Chapter Four will be used, to further test the theoretical Model presented in Chapter Two. Again the broad areas of 'Social Organization' and 'Environmental Perception' will be reviewed.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Family

The kinship structure of the Lardil tribe has been seen as being rather complex. Of significance to this discussion are two factors. Firstly, extended families do still share accommodation. Secondly, traditional domiciliary proximity relationships have been largely retained. These relationships are dynamic. Aborigines of the Mornington Island Settlement change their family location, at times, between the dwelling spaces.

Chapter Four found that European housing has not prevented Lardil Aborigines form retaining these patterns. However, as multiple family units do occupy single three bedroom dwellings, overuse may be expected.

Chapter Four has supported the assertion that European housing does suffer strain from occupation by larger numbers of

people than experienced in white Australian communities. However, any suggestion that white style housing could prevent comfortable proximity relationships would be refuted by Chapter Four.

Materialism

Chapter Four found that the traditional Aboriginal group sharing ethic prevails in the Lardil tribe. However, this was not acknowledged as a direct source of stress for Aborigines in European housing.

Some European artifacts have been eagerly accepted by Lardil Aborigines, but there is still no clear trend toward material wealth in the Western sense among these people.

Absence of aspiration to own a house was recognized in Chapter Four. No evidence of pride of ownership was seen at the Mornington Island Settlement. This is consistent with earlier findings, and may be regarded as a potential source of stress where pressure exists from white administrations to follow European ideals of house ownership.

Work Ethnic

The aspect of the work ethic of relevance to this subject concerns maintenance of housing.

Maintenance of the Mornington Island Settlement housing by residents has been shown to be of a poor standard. Dwellings are regularly swept, but other cleaning and damage repairs are largely ignored.

The domiciles appear degrading and depressing, but Chapter Four found Lardil Aborigines usually do not share this view of the state of their dwellings.

Aborigines attitude to maintenance work can be seen to cause little stress among Aborigines. White people's concern for the poor state of dwellings may not be necessarily shared by Aborigines.

Fire

Fire has been used by Lardil people for multiple purposes. Government housing provided on Mornington Island has had no allowance made for a hearth. Chapter Four explained that this caused little problem for the Aborigines as most activity has occured out of doors.

Fires are used extensively in outdoor spaces. The findings of Chapter Four can not support the premise that European housing places restriction on the use of fire, although most activity is associated with fires in some manner. This is due to the fact that almost all activity has taken place in the external spaces of the Settlement.

Natural Environment

Traditional Aboriginal perception of the natural environment is strong among the Lardil people. These people feel a strong bond with nature. This is expressed by the clear external orientation of most Lardil activity. Housing provided has hardly been used at daytime. At night most Aborigines sleep inside the houses.

The strong orientation to the external spaces of the Settlement supports the premise that Aborigines experience a degree of psychological discomfort by enclosure within a European house.

Built Environment

Chapter Four findings are consistent with some elements of the theoretical Model of Chapter Two with respect to perception of the built environment. Lardil Aborigines were shown to have little pride of ownership in their dwellings. Artificial structures were seen to hold little social significance in the Mornington Island community.

A need to observe neighbours' activity was shown to be strong among the Lardil Aborigines. This need was restricted to a degree by the European housing.

Some elements of the theoretical Model of transition stress in Aboriginal housing, have been shown to be of lesser importance than may have been expected, because Lardil Aborigines have hardly used their dwelling spaces. Such undesirable dwelling qualities as restriction of observation and the need for flexibility, may be regarded as not applicable to the Mornington Island Aborigines, as little activity is performed indoors.

Conversely, these factors may have prevented these people from fully accepting their dwellings.

Chapter Four in fact, found that the inflexibility of European housing did not cause any real stress among the Lardil Aborigines. These people have used their European dwelling spaces as in traditional society. The European housing has not significantly restricted this behaviour.

SUMMARY

Chapters Three and Four have validated certain elements of the theoretical findings of Chapter Two, as presented in the Model (figure 2.3), and have refuted the significance of other elements. The preceding discussion on non-urban Aborigines has asserted the following points of the Model:

Family

European type housing for Aborigines often suffers strain due to overcrowding which results form traditional Aboriginal kinship structures. Stress may be suffered by residents as a result.

Materialism

Aborigines' absence of aspiration to gain material wealth has often been a barrier against success in white attempts to provide housing.

Work Ethnic

Aborigines' lack of interest in dwelling maintenance has led to degradation and to a depressing environment.

Fire

Fire is most important to most Aborigines.

Natural Environment

Aboriginal people generally do feel a strong affinity with nature and experience a degree of stress by enclosure within a European house.

Built Environment

Little pride has been shown by Aborigines in houses provided, and as stated above, this had lead to degradation and thus to a depressing environment.

Ability to observe surroundings, and neighbours' activity is important to most Aboriginal people. Stress may result where this is restricted by Western housing.

The preceding discussion has not supported all early theoretical findings. The following points have been established, and are in disagreement with the Model:

Allowance for fires or provision of hearths is not an imperative aspect of housing design for Aborigines. Fire places are usually established in external spaces of Aboriginal settlements.

Inflexibility of spaces provided by European houses does not prevent Aborigines from following traditional flexible domiciliary behaviour patterns.

Chapters Three and Four have supported the central premises of Chapter Two -

> that transition stress, to some degree, is suffered by most non-urban Aborigines who are housed in European type housing; and that provision of European housing may thus be regarded as an unsympathetic approach to Aboriginal housing.

These proven facts positively assert certain aspects of the hypothesis of this thesis. Architectural involvement is the only remaining factor to be examined, and this will be covered in the following section.

5:03 ARCHITECTURAL CONSULTATION

Chapter Two examined difficulties involved in architectural consultation with Aborigines. Architectural involvement in the field of Aboriginal housing has rarely been entirely successful, although Chapter Two initially suggested that the architect should be the person best equipped to solve the problem of appropriate housing for non-urban Aborigines. Problems have arisen mainly as a result of communication difficulties. The prime factors in communication between architects and Aborigines, are the respective attitudes of architects and Aborigines.

Chapter Two suggested that architects in this field have been rather dogmatic, too willing to force ideas and principles on their Aboriginal clients. This suggestion has been supported, in Chapter Three, by examination of the Laverton project. It was claimed that the architect of this scheme did not follow expressed requirements of the Aborigines, but pushed his ideals on them. This attitude is not conducive to successful design.

In addition, Aborigines generally have had a poor attitude to European Australians, partly due to their assumption of self-superiority. Architects are far from innocent with regard to this assumption, and thus, may especially be disliked by Aborigines. Aboriginal frustration with architects has been exemplified at Laverton, where Aborigines complained of architectural arrogance.

Discussion in Chapter Three is consistent with the assertion of Chapter Two that communication difficulty has been experienced between architects and Aborigines. This difficulty has been due to many aspects of the cultural gap as outlined in Chapter One, as well as to language barriers.

Chapters One and Two showed that designers of Aboriginal housing, need a fuller appreciation of Aboriginal requirements and a more sympathetic involvement.

Both Looma and Laverton studies have shown that problems in Aboriginal housing design often result from architects' misinterpretation of Aborigines' requirements. The clearest example of this arose at Laverton, where the architect allowed for Aborigines' need to view nature by providing a large opening in the roof. Of greater importance to these people was horizontal observation, which was fully restricted by high closed walls. Looma Aborigines were provided with a breezeway in recognition of their preference for outdoor spaces, but this space itself was regarded as an enclosure.

Problems of architectural design of the above type may spring from three qualities:

i. lack of knowledge and sympathy
ii. romanticism
iii. generalization

Looma showed deficiencies which are attributable to lack of knowledge and sympathy on the part of the designer. Spaces provided at Looma were shown in Chapter Three to be rather ill considered.

Laverton is a prime example of a romantic approach to design for Aborigines. The architect of this project applied his understanding of Aboriginal culture to arrive at a creative concept which did not work. Failure resulted mainly from practical points.

The variety of Aboriginal settlements studied in earlier chapters has shown that generalization of Aboriginal needs with respect to housing design is not valid. Housing requirements even for this small selection of Aboriginal groups varied considerably.

The following points suggested in Chapter Two were validated in Chapter Three.

1. Many failures in Aboriginal housing have been, at least partly, due to architectural consultation difficulties.

2. Difficulty of communication, resulting from language barriers, and from many aspects of cultural gap, has been the primary problem in architectural consultation with Aborigines.
3. Arrogance and ethnocentricity, on the part of the architect, have been seen to have potential, to damage communication between architect and Aborigine.
4. Misinterpretation in design of Aboriginal housing requirements is common.
5. Problems result from lack of knowledge, romanticism and/or generalization; which may also be seen as a lack of understanding and sympathy.

The preceding discussion has shown that architects should take a more understanding approach to Aboriginal housing. It has been shown that a more sympathetic approach to design of housing for these people would lead to improved housing solutions.

This established fact, positively supports one aspect of the hypothesis of this thesis, the remaining factors having been established in the previous section. The logical development of validation of the hypothesis is summarised in the following section.

5:04 HYPOTHESIS VALIDITY

HYPOTHESIS RESTATED

Sympathetic architectural involvement in the field of Aboriginal housing can ease the stress suffered by Aboriginal clients

HYPOTHESIS TESTED

Chapter Two presented a theoretical model of transition stress in Aboriginal housing, and presented theoretical findings on architectural involvement in this field. These factors have been tested through Chapters Three and Four, with examination of differing cases of non-urban Aboriginal

settlements. Consistencies and conflicts between the findings of these chapters, have been previously summarised in this concluding chapter.

Discussion on architectural involvement in the field of Aboriginal housing, and on stress factors involved for Aborigines can lead to validation of the hypothesis. The hypothesis, as restated above, can be supported through the findings and conclusions of earlier chapters.

As stated earlier, Chapter Two proposed that Aborigines do suffer stresses in transition to European styled settlements, and that such stress is mainly due to inappropriate housing design. Chapters Three and Four confirmed this, Chapter Two also suggested that architectural involvement in Aboriginal housing has lead to inappropriate solutions, largely due to a lack of understanding and sympathy. This view is reinforced in Chapter Three.

Thus, it follows that sympathetic architectural involvement in the field of Aboriginal housing can ease the stress suffered by Aboriginal clients. Therefore the hypothesis has been validated.

5:05 GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

The following guidelines for architects involved in the design of non-urban Aboriginal housing have been derived from the findings of Chapters Two, Three and Four. For a fuller understanding of the reasons for each point, reference should be made to the body of this thesis.

ARCHITECTURAL CONSULTATION

1. Difficulties in formulating a design brief may be experienced because of communication problems between the architect and Aborigines. These may include:
   - language difficulties
   - Aborigines' unfamiliarity with formal meeting situations

- Aborigines' lack of experience with alternative housing solutions
- short term involvement of the architect with the community

  Many problems may be overcome by involvement of an expert in Aboriginal sociology or anthropology.

2. Architects should approach Aboriginal housing design with an open mind and with a degree of humility.
3. Creative departure from Western suburban norms may often be appropriate.
4. The best solutions may be mundane in terms of Western aesthetic ideals. There may be a need for architects to subjugate their desire to be spectacular.

HOUSING QUALITIES

General Qualities

The following qualities may be regarded as critical for almost all non-urban Aboriginal housing solutions:

1. All housing must moderate environmental conditions to human comfort levels. This must be maintained as the primary function of human shelter.
2. Housing should have the ability to accommodate an extended family.
3. Housing spaces should not be so enclosed as to significantly restrict Aborigines':
   - need to observe neighbours
   - affinity with the immediate environment
   - relationship to fire
4. Extensive external shaded areas should be provided.
5. Housing should be finished with materials which demand a minimum of regular cleaning and maintenance activity.

Specific Qualities

Generalization of Aboriginal housing requirements across a number of communities is to be avoided. The objective of a successful universal standard design is not a valid aim,

nor is it achievable. Specific social and cultural requirements of each Aboriginal group should be ascertained. The significance of the following qualities should be determined for each particular Aboriginal group in housing design:

1. The importance of social relationships within the community should be determined. The ramifications of these relationships with respect to physical proximity in sleeping and domiciliary spaces must be ascertained. This factor may be well catered for by introducing a degree of flexibility of spaces. Formal and strict spaces may restrict social patterns.
2. A separate male domiciliary zone may be required.
3. The importance and use of fire within the domiciliary space should be determined. Both the social and practical significance may be relevant. The use of fire should be allowed for in housing solutions as required by each particular group.

Additional Requirements

As for design of any housing, the particular requirements of the client should be determined on the following points:

1. storage needs - food, clothing, other
2. services required
3. ablutions and personal cleaning requirements
4. food preparation area needs

Cost

As explained early in Chapter One, the economic factors of Aboriginal housing have not been considered in this thesis. However, one most important design determinant in almost all cases will be building cost. It should be remembered that, in many cases, successful housing solutions for non-urban Aborigines may prove to be relatively inexpensive.

5:06 FINAL NOTE

In this thesis, an attempt has been made to help to improve the state of Aboriginal Housing in remote areas of Australia. It has been directed towards architects, as designers of housing for Aborigines. Through examining a number of case studies in detail, it has been found that a more sympathetic involvement of architects in this field can lead to improved solutions.

There appears to be a growing academic awareness of the need for a deep cultural and social understanding of Aborigines before implementing social programmes in general, or housing in particular.

There is evidence of a growing awareness of this in government circles, in the media, and amongst the public. The architectural profession must also learn that many non-urban Aborigines have special requirements, directly as a result of their unique social and cultural structure.

It is hoped that this thesis may assist architects to gain a better understanding of the complexities involved in housing Aborigines.

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